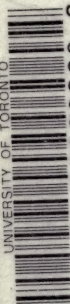


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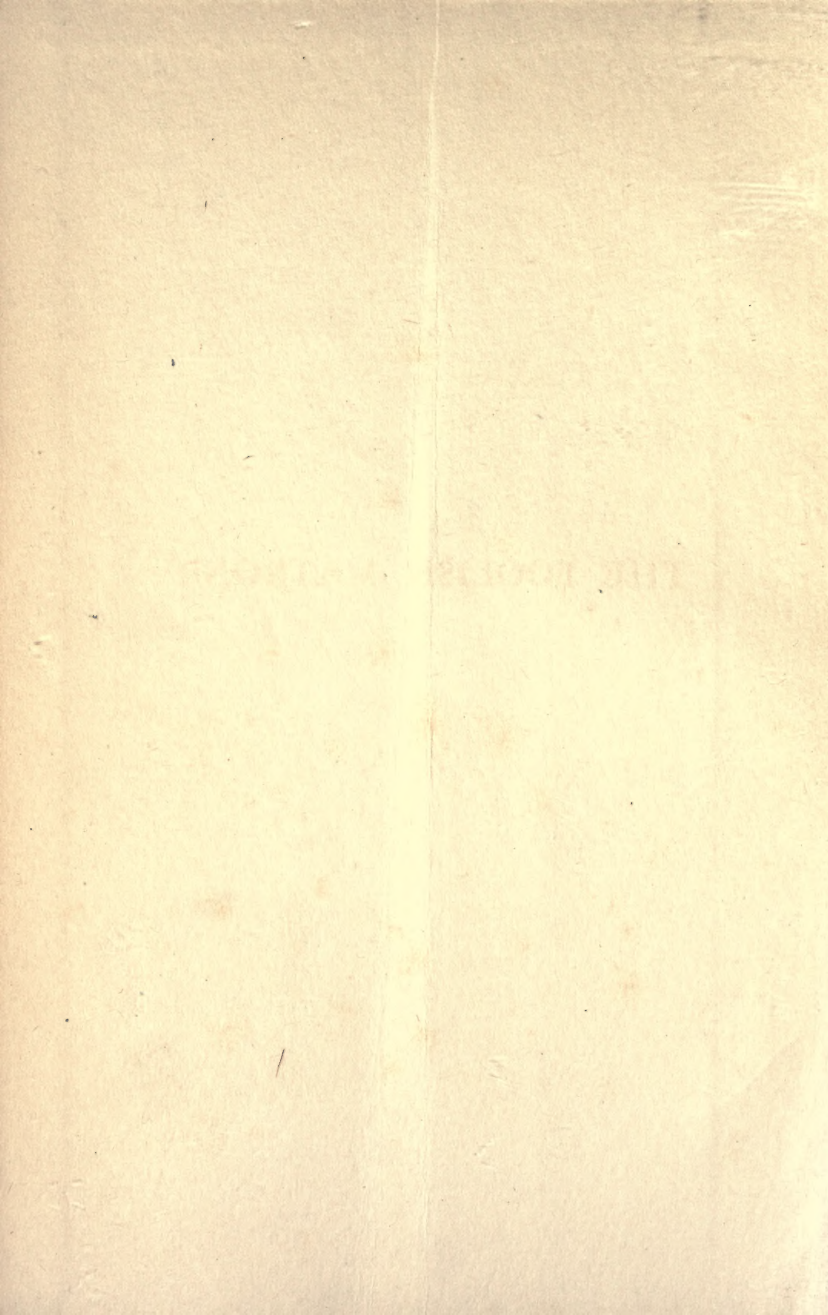
The
FOOLISH
MATRONS

By
DONN BYRNE

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THE FOOLISH MATRONS

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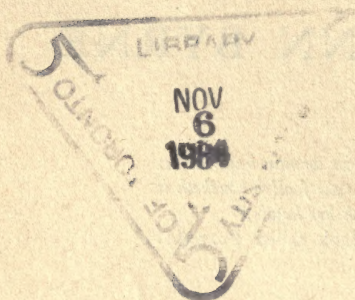
By DONN BYRNE

*"Every wise woman buildeth her
house: but the foolish plucketh it
down with her hands."*

—The Book called Proverbs.



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I-U

*The Players ask for a Blessing
on the Psalteries and Themselves*

“ O kinsmen of the Three in One
O kinsmen bless the hands that play.
The notes they waken shall live on
When all this heavy history's done;
Our hands, our hands must ebb away.
. . . . The proud and careless notes live on,
But bless our hands that ebb away.”

W. B. Yeats

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Book I

THE BOOK OF THE BUILDING HOUSE

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CHAPTER I

I

FROM where she sat on the veranda of the country club Annis could see the golf links unroll themselves like the fancy of some Italian gardener. First there was the long undulation of the fairway, somehow like a river. Then would come the white and regular splashes of bunkers, very exact, and beside that the sparkling emerald of the putting greens, with their minute red flags astrain upon the wind. And over there was a lake, so pretty and so artificial—all it lacked was a swan preening its feathers with a black bill. And here and there were clumps of trees, tamed like canaries. On the ninth hole, and on the eleventh, and on the fourteenth and fifteenth, were groups of golfers, moving sedately as ants or as soldiers performing some military evolution. That would be her husband and Sandy Sanderson, the pro. who was visiting them. And with them were Aleck, the home pro., and Howard Menzies of Providence. She wondered how her husband was playing to-day.

She was glad he was having a good game to-day,

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poor Ian. It was seldom he got the chance, what with his practice and his lectures and the abominable number of people who wanted their appendices removed and their skulls trepanned and the thousand other things that will happen to people's inwards set right. And there was no golfer like him, not one, even Stuart Maiden admitted that, he with his galaxy of stars. But Ian had no time for tournaments, for traveling hither and thither and spending weeks and money. He worked too hard for that, poor Ian! And yet he always seemed to have time.

She had traveled around the first three holes with her foursome, leaving her son Tim on the veranda, attended by Laertes, the Great Dane. And she was pleased as a child to see her husband drive level with the pros.—that long, raking tee shot of his that sent the ball through the air like a bullet, left it suspended as though on wings for an instant before it dropped to the course. Then there was the crisp mashie iron to the green, the seven-foot putt that tickled the cup for a birdie. She had laughed as her husband regarded Menzies with malevolent contempt when after a drive, a brassy, and a mashie to the green the dapper little architect from Providence had dropped a twenty-foot putt with a patent mallet. Sandy Sanderson had shaken his weatherbeaten head.

"No matter, Ian!" These Scotch pros. always called her husband by his first name, though he was one of the greatest surgeons in the world. It was their compliment. "It's the auld dog for the hard road and the pup for the causey."

She had come back then to find Tim. The three-

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year-old was passing the time attempting to get some show of interest out of the Great Dane. First he would try pulling its ears and then pulling its tail, and when that didn't succeed he would try a few running kicks at the big dog's diaphragm, sitting down with a bump after each attempt. And then Laertes, having had enough, would catch him up by the back of the rompers and carry him with dignity to the veranda rail and drop the child, wriggling and kicking, on to the grass, and, returning to the place whence he came, strike a noble and reserved attitude, such as is expected from a winner of blue ribbons.

II

There were three women having lunch on the club veranda in the farthest corner when she returned. They had been watching Tim and the dog and speaking in loud, grating tones. Annis did not turn to look at them. From the sudden silence she knew that they had been speaking about her and her husband, as they always seemed to do when she and he appeared. She often was tempted to go across and talk to them.

"No, you are wrong, I am not forty, I am only thirty-six. Yes, you are quite right, I am getting a trifle fat, but not as much as you think; one hundred and fifty-three pounds, not one hundred and seventy-five. My hair is all my own and it isn't bleached. No, I assure you. And you are right, we are too poor to afford a better car. You see, surgeons don't make as much money as brokers and distillers and dairymen princes. They don't work for themselves.

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They work for everybody. And quite often the brokers and dairymen don't pay them at all. Is there anything else? What, nothing else? Glad to satisfy you."

But she couldn't afford to do it. Some one in the family had to be a diplomat. Certainly Ian wasn't.

And another thing they were eternally discussing was her leaving of the stage ten years ago. In a way her neighbors were proud of having one who was called a great tragedienne among them, proud as they might be of the man who first jumped off Brooklyn Bridge or who broke the bank at Monte Carlo. Annis had overheard two of them discussing her once.

"That's the wife of Doctor Fraser, the surgeon," she was pointed out. "She was Annis Grand, the actress." The wife of a railroad magnate was explaining her to the wife of an oil-company officer.

"I never heard of her, dearie."

"She used to do highbrow stuff—Shakespeare and Ibstein."

"I once saw a play of this Ibstein's, dearie, 'The Gabbler,' I think it was called. Believe me, dearie, there was nothing to it. This highbrow stuff is all a bluff. John says—"

But Annis only smiled. Ten years ago she would have been filled with riotous contempt, but now she suffered fools gladly, as the theology directed, or, as her husband put it, "Never allow any item of gratuitous amusement to pass you by."

"I wonder why she left the stage?"

"I guess she was due for the gate, dearie, and,

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anyhow, she had hooked her man. She hadn't the goods. Can you see her beside Mary Pickford?"

When Annis appeared they would rush to her, simpering:

"Oh, Mrs. Fraser, we were just talking about your beautiful little boys. Ain't they just the cunnin'est things!"

III

She could never come to this corner of the club veranda and see on one side the pretty regularity of the golf links, and on the other the mountains and the sea, without drawing an obvious parallel between the stage and life. Here was the greensward carefully kept, mowed, watered, and rolled. It had its exact teeing grounds, its exact greens. Its hazards were artificial and one only got into them to make either a spectacular recovery or an act of comedy. Its lake was artificial; its trees trimmed. The golfers going through their motions were as serious and intent as any player strutting and puffing on the stage.

But the mountain intrigued her and the sea thrilled. The mountain raised its bold aquilinity to the sky, and to get to its summit there was a hazardous path, rocks and brambles and bobcats in the woods, and snakes that bit with venom, and they said there was bear there. There was a brown darkness through the woods, with occasional patches of sunlight and the pungent perfume of pine trees. And there was no artifice to it. And the sea beside her where the ships passed, a lonely and powerful, and a beautiful and terrible thing. And men staked

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their lives on it. And in it there was great merriment, as of the plunging dolphins, and great terrors, as the shark with his snapping, malevolent jaws, and great mystery, as the fish which the Lord prepared to swallow up Jonah and in whose belly Jonah was three days and three nights.

And there was another subtle difference. About the links was the atmosphere which many of the players had cast from them, men who had come there to drop from their shoulders for an instant or so the sordid ambitions and worries of finance, those that the King of Israel mentioned when he spoke of one who maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing. Mean exhalations, as of sordid throat-cutting and cheap trickery. There was nothing of that about the mountain and the sea. They might be relentless, they might be terrible, but they were not cheap nor mean.

At times, sitting there, there would come a look into her eyes as though she were tranced, and you would forget the fine comeliness of her, and her healthy, powerful, beautiful body, because she would become all spirit. Her life on the stage had been gone these ten years, and only old playgoers remembered her, so swiftly does life now pass and so little do people hold impressions. Occasionally some writer, as young Broun in his journal, would mention her old-time triumphs, regretting her passing from the painted scene. Or some old mummer to whom she had been kind would doff his hat and mumble as she passed him in New York. Or a young actress would do her the reverence of a worshipping look as she sat down with her big husband in a Metro-

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politan restaurant, having heard of her Lady Macbeth and her Juliet and her Mrs. Tanqueray. There remained the shadow of a great name, and that was all. But to Annis it still was life-ful, and she kept it before her eyes, though there was less than no regret for it in her, but thanks for her delivery. She liked to remember it, as a freedman will remember his slavery so that liberty may taste the sweeter. She had been more than a slave. She had been an ensorceled marionette, and now she was a woman.

IV

Annis's earliest recollections were of her father beating her.

"Don't mumble," he would insist in his high-pitched cockney accent. "Say it distinctly."

"Scale of dragon, tooth of wolf,
Witches' mummy, maw and gulf
Of the ravined salt-sea shark.
Root of the hemlock digg'd i' th' dark,
Liver of blaspheming Jew,
Gall of goat and slips of—slips of—slips of—"

her face would go white with panic.

"Slips of—slips of—slips of—" Her father would mimic her. Then he would suddenly catch her by the ear and twist it, in the meantime cracking her on the head with the heavy blue pencil he held and bringing tears to her eyes and a pain in her temples. "What!" he would storm. "Abe Grand's daughter, and not able to speak a player's line. Is my addition to be soiled by a stupid slut of a daughter,

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fit only to play a scullion's part in some amateur's piece. 'Of yew,' you brat, 'of yew.' Go ahead!"

" . . . of yew,"

Annis would proceed, sobbing a terrible child's sob.

"Silvered in the moon's eclipse
Nose of Turk, and Tartar's lips;
Finger of birth-strangled babe
Ditch-delivered by a drab—"

"Come hither!" Abe would purr, "not draib," and again the wicked pencil. "The 'a flat' as in Patrick, as in your own illustrious name of Grand—though little luster you'll ever shed on it, God wot!"

"Make the gruel thick and slab:

she would patter, easily.

"Good! Good!"

"Add there to a tiger's chaudron."

"Father, what is a chaudron?" She was amazed at herself for having the temerity to ask, but she knew that if she understood the word she would remember it the better, and, remembering it, she would avoid that terrible blue pencil that cracked on her little head like a malevolent electric spark.

But the great Shakesperian actor was not pleased.

"A chaudron is a chaudron!" he would roar, with frowning brows. "What else could it be?"

"For the ingredients of our cauldron"

Annis would hurry on.

"Double, double!
Double, double toil and trouble;
Fire burn and cauldron bubble."

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She was eleven years old when this used to happen, and it is a strange thing that she can remember no event farther back than that. Before that all was drab and painful, even as this was. Of course there were flashes of memory—of some landlady who, by strange chance, had been kind to her on the travels of the Abe Grand Shakesperian Repertory Company. Or of some day when the sun was shining and the trees were very green. Or of a special treat when one of the players was kind to her when drunk and gave her a dime for herself, and she would spend this surreptitiously on a charlotte russe. "I don't know why," she says to-day, "but a charlotte russe always spelled luxury to me. I used to dream of one for a month ahead and pray that some one would give me a dime. Once I got one from a gentleman in a fur coat in Philadelphia, but my father saw it in my hand and he took it away from me, and I couldn't cry for fear I would be beaten. Oh, I was about nine years old, I should say."

It is very strange to see that splendid woman now, in her comfortable, spacious home, with the fire blazing and the candles lighted and happiness all about her in the warm air, speak of tragedies like that, and that is very much of a tragedy to a child. And then a host of other memories sweep in on her, and her face grows drawn, and there creeps into her eyes the look of a broken, cowering spaniel.

"Oh, he was a brute!" she shivers. "A beast of the field could not have been like him." And hatred distils in her cornflower eyes, like acid in a glass retort.

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Her husband, standing by the fire, mending a fishing rod, or playing with the Great Dane's ears, looks up and raps out a command like an officer.

"Annis! Stop that!"

He seems to yank her bodily out of some dangerous, eddying current of evil memories and maleficent emotion. And then she turns and smiles at him, like the moon shaking off the clouds.

"It's all right, Ian," she says.

She remembers him, as our fathers doubtless remember him, as a big, burly man, with heavy lines on his face and a blustering manner. He used to dress, she recalls, in a roomy frock coat and striped trousers, and he had a sealskin vest and a heavy gold chain across it. His hair was iron gray, inclined to be curly, and it was inclined to be greasy—the old actor, all the world over, such as our bright young vaudevillians love to travesty. Such he was in the street.

Annis remembers him particularly as Macbeth and Othello on the stage. "He was a fine actor," she admits. "There's no doubt of that." She sees him still, the burlythane of Glamis, with helmet and hauberk and battle-axe, brooding like a wounded eagle:

"To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time;
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
Life's but a walking shadow; a poor player,
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
And then is heard no more; it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing."

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Or she sees him as the negroid Venetian general speaking before his judges and with sonorous voice and Afric color suggesting all the wonders of Mandeville and the chronicles of Prester John:

“ . . . of antres vast, and deserts idle,
Rough quarries, rocks, and hills whose heads touch heaven,
It was my hint to speak, such was the process;
And of the Cannibals that each other eat,
The Anthropophagi, and men whose heads
Do grow beneath their shoulders . . . ”

“He was not a subtle actor,” his daughter sums him up, “but you could not forget him.” Such he was on the stage.

In what one calls private life, which is the real measure of the man, Abe Grand was by far one of the damndest rascals that ever drew the breath of life. Of his cadging of liquor in various towns a volume could be written. One can see the florid scoundrel at a provincial bar, surrounded by yokel bloods, deferential toward his importance and contemptuous of his calling, buying him his favorite gin and bitters while he discoursed to them of the importance of actors. “Good my lord,” he would quote, “will you see the players well bestowed? Do you hear, let them be well used, for they are the abstract and brief chronicles of the time.” You can imagine his foot on the rail, and he alone, reading that wretched journal he patronized, that abominable hotchpotch of cheap theatrical criticism and comment, of racing information, of filthy scandal, while he waited for some one to come in and pay his reckoning. But that is only contemptible.

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I am not going to say much about the succession of leading women of his who were his mistresses—but such a dignified name cannot be for them—who were his drabs, I had rather say, buxom decaying beauties with a weakness for showy furs and nips of stout. That was his business and theirs—an unbelievably sordid affair. Nor am I going to mention at much length his wife, for Annis will not care to have her mother chronicled, however kindly. She was a pale, ineffective woman, whose beauty and spirit had gone, as a plant wilts, grows yellow and unlovely when the sun is shut off from it by a high wall. And Abe Grand had shut the sun from her. Angular, with hair tattered and streaked with gray, the only part she could play in the repertory was a witch in “Macbeth,” she who had been the prettiest Rosalind that London ever saw with her tall fairness and her bonny legs. And now she was reduced to dressing her husband’s drabs, on the off chance of the only thing she had in life, a drink of liquor, which she would go to the most pitiable lengths and stratagems to obtain. She vanished when Abe Grand died. But she is not dead, I am certain of that: Annis and Ian have her somewhere, as Annis had her before she married Ian, where the days pass peacefully and clean winds blow through the poor unhinged brain, and there is care and kindness about her. There was one great evil Abe Grand did, to ruin the existence of his wife, to unhinge her mind, to make her in the end a servant to his fancy women.

One thing more he calculated—there can be no doubt about that. His daughter was to be a great

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actress. He could see the actor beneath the raw material, as the old Irish herdsmen are supposed to discern the steak beneath the hair and hide of the steer. And he had every intention of using her talents and career to his advancement, to put another drink beneath his belt; to get another notice in the paper, to have another drab at his coat tails. Her virginity, too, that would be worth a pretty penny to him, from the right man.

There is Abe Grand for you, father of Annis, who made her the great actress she was, gave her the grounding in the profession, at any rate, and furnished her the opportunity she needed. There he is, as well as I can draw him, inside, outside, and motive power. They tell me there must have been good in the man. There is no man so bad, I am informed, that he has no good quality. And so Abe Grand—I grant he may have had, as I would grant, to avoid argument, that pigs have wings. By God! I cannot see any good in the man.

His plans for his daughter came to nothing, for one Christmas Eve when the chimes were ringing he stepped out of his club door down old New York way, where he had been discussing his art with his peers. He was full of peace and good will toward every one but his wife and his daughter. Swift ice had sheathed the city pavements, and, falling forward, his skull cracked like a china plate, and suddenly there was grandeur and terror about him such as no living man ever knows. . . .

So they picked him up and carried him off, and provided a funeral for him. "Poor Abe! he's gone!" "We must all go," said others, though they could

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not believe it. "And the rest is silence!" quoted the actors, sententiously. He got two sticks of print in the papers, and a preacher who affected actors conducted the service, making a neat address into which he dragged as a matter of course the tags about "the abstract and brief chronicles of the time" and "the undiscovered country from whose bourn no traveler returns." The actors followed his bier to the cemetery with the sorrowful dignity expected of them. And then they put him on his back, as the negro chanty has it, and threw mud in his face.

V

I had thought somehow to bring before you the career of Annis Grand from the death of her father until the day she married Ian Fraser, the surgeon; to mention the roles she played and the things the critics said of her, all the glory and magnificence of her art, but the memory of Abe Grand takes the heart out of one for a task like that. The tenuous, invisible curtain between the audience and the lighted stage is raised, and after that there are no longer Player Kings and Player Queens, but poor strolling mummers, harassed as ordinary mortals, for all their momentary tinsel. The crowds go joyously to the theater of evenings, and past them in the street, unnoticed, the shivering players hurry to their work, as the bricklayer goes with his pick and shovel. And while they mouth great sentiments and depict splendid action, there haunts them always the fear of poverty, of illness, of loss of comeliness. "In a little while the play will be over," they say, "and

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we will be pattering the pavements, and waiting in antechambers, as no master mechanic need do—all the time deferred hope making the heart sick!”

When she had come out of that convent whither her mother's relatives had sent her on her father's death she got her chance immediately. And there were few who did not realize that a great actress had been born to Manhattan's barren avenues. She forged ahead steadily with the healthy, slow progress that denotes staying power.

The photographs of that time show her to have been a slight, tall girl, and as you look at them you get the idea of fine linen. Her hair was flaxen and there was a great mass of it: her eyes were blue as the flowers of the flax, and her figure like its waving stalk. There was a shadow on her face and a pathetic look in her eyes. I like her better to-day, with her splendid presence, her figure of a Norse goddess, and her face gravely happy, like some innocent old priest's.

Her associates found her hard to understand. She kept to herself. “She's priggish,” said they. “She's too stuck-up,” said others. They didn't know that early life of hers that had made her put armor about her heart and being. She never fully smiled, they complained. My God! how could she!

There was another matter that the players noticed. When acting her part she seemed to be in a trance. She was, what others boast to be, the figure she portrayed. Before her entry on the stage there was a hush, a catching of breath, and then, as she appeared, a clapping of hands like the fire of small

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arms, but she paid no attention to that as other women would, turning to the audience and bowing, or smirking with pleasure. For her the audience did not exist. She swept in from the wings or the background, and a miracle took place. Before the audience lived Ophelia, dead for a thousand years; her sweet comeliness, her vacant eyes, her mouth trembling as she bemoaned her father:

"His beard was white as snow,
All flaxen was his poll:
He is gone, he is gone,
And we cast away moan,
God 'a' mercy on his soul!
And of all Christian souls! I pray God! God be wi' you!"

Or Desdemona, sweet matron of Venice, pleading with the bearded seigniors for leave to accompany her husband to the wars:

"I saw Othello's visage in his mind;
And to his honors, and his valiant part,
Did I my soul and fortune consecrate.
So that, dear lords, if I be left behind,
A moth of peace, and he go to the war,
The rites for which I love him, are bereft me,
And I a heavy interim shall support
By his dear absence."

Or the wife of Macbeth with her leaning shoulder and narrow, glinting eyes:

" . . . When in swinish sleep,
Their drenched nature lies as in a death,
What cannot you and I perform upon
The unguarded Duncan? What not put upon
His spongy officers; who shall bear the guilt
Of our great quell?"

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Or the piteous Solveig, with her shawl and bundle,
standing before Peer Gynt's hut in the snow:

"Long and heavy nights, and long and empty days
Taught me that I should not put off coming. . . .
It seemed to me that life had been quenched down there.
I could not laugh nor weep from the depths of my heart.
I knew not for certain how you might be minded. . . .
. . . In all of God's wide earth
I have none I can call either father or mother;
I have loosed me from all of them. . . ."

And then she would leave the stage, and her psychosis was a thing that terrified at times, and toward the end of her career became almost an obsession, that it took her quite a while again, hours, maybe, to revert to Annis Grand. When she entered her dressing room, sitting down before her mirror and her array of cosmetics, pencils, powders, what not, it seemed to her that she was in the midst of a sort of necromantic practice. She would allow herself to go blank, as it were, and while fixing her make-up she would concentrate on the part; and then on a certain instant the whole personality of the part would come flooding into the pores of her, like a cell being charged.

And then she would arise and go on the stage. . . .

And none of the artifices of mummery had power to hold her back to Annis Grand. She was the person she portrayed. Not the flimsy wings nor the painted curtain, not the kind humanity of the audience nor the electric lights which every moment should have reminded her, "This is not fact; this is fiction. Not life; but an unsubstantial pageant," would hold her attention to sane material

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things. She had changed. She was some one else. And that terrified her.

She felt that there was a strange necromancy at work. She expelled her own personality, and a strange soul entered the house of her body, and used it freely during the span of her playing. Her reason told her that was not possible. And the harsh, precise religion which had been forced on her in the convent told her this was not possible, either. The only spirits in this creed were guardian angels—all good souls were in heaven, and evil ones and ones remiss in attending ritual were padlocked in hell—and a fine, fruity, cloven-footed Satan who tempted people to murder and fornication, theft and remissness toward the ritual—a fine, handsome fellow, with a tail spiked like a spear, who smiled with an ingratiating leer and was most amazingly like the villain in a ten-cent tragedy. It was not He.

To other people it would seem impossible. But to her it was unreally real. *She knew.* At times about her, when she was concentrating on some tragic woman's part, there would encompass her a red darkness, and the invisible host of the air would people it. Strange, malevolent spirits, who sought kinship up and down the world. They were utterly evil and they had no bodies, but eyes and a misty bulk. She could imagine them gathering of nights by some lonely seashore, under a misshapen saffron moon, to fight and revel and mow until the barnacle geese fled with a frightened clamor, and the reeds shivered, and the wind hurried past with a moan. Strange, deserted houses, too, they inhabited, houses

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which cast wrong shadows and had an atmosphere like a tale by Poe or a story of Mr. Algernon Blackwood's, and where they abode the grass grew yellow, and the flowers died, and no birds flew. . . . They were not the yokel's vision of sheeted forms in a graveyard, nor the ecclesiastic's of the insidious and round-limbed succubæ. They were misty, atomic hulks of evil will.

And one of them would take possession of her, she felt, and play the part some writer desired, of tragedy and stark emotion, feeling through the nerves and organs of Annis Grand the sensations it once had in an earthly existence, and calling forth the plaudits of the press: "An innocent young girl playing the part of an old and murderous debauched woman in such a manner as to make it starkly real before an audience: that is genius." How did they know it was Annis Grand and genius? Might it not have been some old hag and experience?

Then after the show there would be an effort of will to bring herself back. And that gave her the thought that the newcomer was attempting to hold her body from her. And that often made her cry out in terror, so that her maid would come running in, too, if she were outside, with a face the color of lime.

"I thought something had happened to you, miss." The maid's hand would be against her heart.

"Oh, nothing!" Annis would continue to laugh. "I was just practicing something—for a part, Annie."

"You gave me a terrible turn, miss. You

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sounded exactly as if you were fighting for your life."

Some night, perhaps, she felt, the Occupant would not go, and thenceforward people would point and say: "That's Annis Grand. She's a great actress, but, you know about her—don't you?" They would lower their voices. "She's a morphine fiend." Or, "She's an ether sniffer." Or, "She ruins men, one after another." Or, "She's one of those queer women, you know"—and the voice would drag off. There were people on the stage who had so changed in a few years that this seemed the only explanation. And all this time she, the real Annis Grand, would be a poor, whimpering, naked spirit, crying for her body, weeping over the marshes, gibed at, mowed at by the horrible population, the unliving and undead. And her father would be there and she at his mercy again. So must have gone the spirits of the two men of the country of the Gergesenes, whose bodies were occupied by devils, and whom Christ Exorcist rescued, putting the alien spirits into a herd of swine. They came out of the tombs, did the undead in the living men's bodies, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass that way.

Some people fear being buried alive, and some fear cancer, and some have a fear of people jumping at them out of the dark, and some have a great terror of death—all these people live in torture, as Annis Grand lived in torture, because she feared the sinister folk of the air.

CHAPTER II

I

YOUR Sherlock Holmes might have met his Waterloo in sizing up Ian Fraser. That six feet of bulky muscle with the red hair and gray eyes, what did he do for a living? The faint Scots bur, which at times became broad as the Mississippi, proclaimed his race, for all his birthplace was Boston. But there was too much of the fighting quality, and no class smugness, in the features to belong to the moneyed American ranks of gentlemen at large. And at once you knew he was no actor. He might have been a fashionable doctor, but he had not that hustling, important air. His hands, of course, might have marked him for a surgeon. They were big and sinewy and capable looking, and actually clean as a priest's should be.

I should like, if I can, to get the figure and measure of Ian Fraser right before you, because Ian is a great man, and, what is better, a fine man. Many people are uncomfortable with him because he says what he means and he means what he says, and he takes strange dislikes to people and cannot abide them. On the other hand, he is a great friend. Take a New York drawing-room of the middle class, and when he enters the men cease boasting and the women no longer affect babyish manners

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or the air of the great world. He is so simple, so direct, that he puts every one out.

He can be rude, abominably rude, but everyone grants that quality to him as an accessory to genius. And somehow the folk he picks to be rude to are those whom everyone secretly dislikes. They tell a terrible story about him in Brooklyn. He was invited to the Heights one night for dinner, and before going in he was introduced to a fulsome matron of old Dutch stock.

"Oh, you are Doctor Fraser, the surgeon," she beamed.

"Yes, madam," he said. "I'm a surgeon."

"I'm glad to know you, Doctor Fraser." She was in full cry now, and nothing could stop her. "Speaking of operations, Doctor Fraser, last year I was taken in the middle of the night in the most violent agony, excruciating agony—"

"Listen, gudewife," he caught her arm and spoke patiently and gently, "I'm unco tired the night, and I hae had a hard day—so you'll understand I'm no interested in hearing how you had your wame stitchit—"

Which explains why a certain matron of the First Families of Brooklyn raises her hands above her obese bust in horror when his name is mentioned.

"Oh, the dreadful man!" she shrills, like a cornered mouse. "Oh, the coarse man!"

There is a certain section of New York practitioners who dislike Fraser intensely. But they need his cunning brain and eye and hand. They have to have it. When his name is mentioned their faces occasionally grow cold: "Oh yes, Fraser!"

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they say noncommittally, but they unburden themselves to their wives.

"I bring him a thousand-dollar fee, and not even 'thank you' from him. Just, 'How's your man, Eckstein?' and passes on. If all surgeons were like him, a fat chance we'd have of living, I'll say!" But none of them ever suggests fee-splitting to him. There is a tradition in New York of a Hebrew practitioner peddling a rich patient from surgeon to surgeon until he came to Fraser. When he reached that portion of the interview beginning, "Well, Doctor, you know business is business—" he found himself suddenly rushed to the doorstep and boosted vehemently in the gutter, Fraser emitting a skirl like a war pipe.

There were others who grew hysterical at the mention of the big surgeon's name, men such as Mr. Irving Harris of Larchmont. His medical man brought Harris to Ian Fraser, knowing Fraser's hand was the only one to save that man's life.

"Mr. Irving Harris," Fraser mused. "Irving Harris. The name is familiar to me. When I returned from Paris and was looking for a foothold in New York, and was pretty hungry at times"—he used to say that very disconcertingly—"I pawned my watch ever so often in a place on Columbus Avenue and the Eighties or Nineties—"

"It was mine," Harris smiled. The doctor was a good fellow, he decided. Fine and hearty, no bluff to him!

"If I remember aright, there were three or four stores—pawnshops—in the same name scattered over the city."

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"They were all mine," Harris beamed.

Fraser's face grew thoughtful. He could never forget those stores on Saturday or Monday, the line of shamed women and broken men at the counter, and children, too, with their bundles of clothes, their poor finery, their tools, their meager jewels. No, nor the clerks behind the counter with their subtle smiles and arrogant manner as they appraised not only the offered pledges, but those who brought them to the usurer, with shrewd Oriental eyes, the virtue of the women, the straits of the men. Nor the unredeemed pledges in the window, the wedding rings, the babies' rings and bracelets. He could never pass those windows without a bitter catch in the heart. They were not objects of gold and silver offered for sale there; they were pieces of souls, fine emotions, hopes, joys, all flayed off under the knout of tragedy, and bought and offered for sale by Irving Harris. "Why not?" as Harris would say, himself. Fraser raised his head.

"You know what this operation is going to cost you, Mr. Harris?"

"I know you'll be reasonable, Doctor, you and I being, in a way of speaking, old friends," went Harris's repulsive leering chant.

"It will cost you just ten thousand dollars, payable in advance."

"What is it I hear!" Harris had started up. "Oi! I should go crazy! Oi! I should live so!"

"Well, Mr. Irving Harris," Fraser's voice had become Scotch as a Covenanter's, "you ken what you can dae. You can juist lay your heid doon and dee."

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He paid, though, for all his fierce protestations. Fraser was the only man who could have pulled him through. Ryan, his medical adviser, chants the surgeon's praises. "The man hadn't the vitality to stand the operation, and he was just ebbing, ebbing, just like that," and he waggles his hand slowly. "Fraser stood over him and you could see him hold Harris back, just like that," and he crooks his elbows like a horseman pulling up a runaway mount before he dashes out his brains against a stone wall. "And you ought to have heard him, 'Live, God damn you! live!' and the sweat standing out on his brow. He just pulled him away from Death."

Is Harris grateful? Just ask him. "Oi! the robbair! Oi! The low-lifer! Oi! the gonoph! Oi! What a snetcher!" and much worse names than that. Oh, very much worse indeed!

On the face of it this doesn't look very good. One doesn't hold up a man, even a pawnbroker, for his money or his life, without sufficient reason. But in the forgotten part of New York where the poor folk hive like bees, around the Gas House district, for example, or Kip's Bay, there's many and many a person living and working and sinning who but for Ian Fraser's hand would be a cripple abed.

"What do we owe you, sir?" asked a washer-woman of him, when he had operated on her daughter for hip disease.

"You owe me nothing but an occasional kind thought. That's all."

And when through the Gas House and upper

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West Side and Kip's Bay and even across to the Gowanus district of Brooklyn the news went that Fraser was to be married, many queer wedding presents appeared, such as a prized blackthorn stick; and the gloves that Terry McGovern used when he knocked out Peddler Palmer; and a child's caul, which brings luck and protects sailors at sea; and a print which he had once admired of the historic pit battle between the dog Roamer and Fighting Pig Pape. And with all these strange presents went a message that made Annis cry:

"God be good to you and yours, Doctor Fraser. You were good to the poor."

II

She was only twenty-four and he twenty-eight the night they carried her from the wrecked limousine to the hospital, her face and hands a horror of blood from the smashed glass. He was not then the great man he is to-day, although he was picked for a winner, as the sporting phrase is, and had done several notable things. He was nearest at hand when she was brought in, and it was his deft, capable hands who stitched her up. She was very scared and shaken.

"It's nothing at all," he told her. "Your scalp a little bit and your arm. Take it easy for a week and you'll be fine. I'll tell you one thing. You were mighty lucky to get off as you did."

For the first time in her life—really the first time—she was interested in a man. Her shaken nerves rallied, marshaled themselves, grew steady

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at the sound of his voice. She could hardly see, but sensed the bulk of him above her. The steady gray eyes, the firm face. When he touched her there was a current of power from his fingers—the healer's gift.

"Is my face badly cut?" she asked, anxiously.

The faintest shade of contempt was in his eyes. The faintest curtness showed in his voice. None but she who had become suddenly sensitive to him might have detected it.

"No' a scratch!"

She felt immediately hurt.

"You see, I've got to work for my living," she explained. "I'm an actress, and it would be impossible if— I wouldn't have you think—"

"No. You're fine." The trace of brusqueness disappeared entirely, and she felt he understood. "You'll be all right in the morning."

She always remembers, Annis does, that just about that moment a queer thought ran in her head: "This is my man." It came no whence. It sprang up spontaneously, as it does with many a woman. Love at first sight, they call it for lack of a better name, for all it is laughed at, and discounted, and rejected by the sanest of men, yet it does happen, and often lasts forever. It is a strange phenomenon and poets are much taken by it. "We must have met in some other existence," they say. And they sing, "When I was a king in Babylon and you were a Christian slave"; or words to that effect. They say it is inexplicable, and that it is, unless by the broadest of hypotheses. They say it is indescribable, but it is hardly that. It is the quality of inevitability.

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He came to see her in the morning. And she was awake then, eagerly awaiting him, wondering whether her impression of last night would be shattered this morning. But from the moment she heard the firm footfall she knew it would not be. And then there was his voice, "And how's everything here?" And her heart jumped again.

By carefully pumping a nurse she found he was unmarried, and she asked him to come and see her. She was turned over to her own medical man, but Ian called meticulously twice at her hotel, and seemed ill at ease when with her. There were only three subjects he could talk about with interest, and, once launched into those three, there was no stopping him. One was golf, of which she knew nothing, but she listened eagerly to anecdotes about the Kirkaldies and the Morrisies and discussions of the merits of Bobbie Andrew and Willie Robertson. "I loved to hear him talk. He was so in earnest."

The second matter she didn't quite understand but could appreciate was Scots literature, over which he was tremendously and partisanly enthusiastic. "William Drummond o' Harthornden, he was a writer; I must get you his *Cypress Grove*, Miss Grand. Talk about your Plato!"

Or he would try to enthuse her over Allan Ramsay:

"Beneath the south side of a craigy field,
Where crystal springs their wholesome waters yield,
Two youthfu' shepherds on the gowans lay—

I wouldn't give 'The Gentle Shepherd' for all
Theocritus and Tasso together."

And the crash of Burns:

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"A prince can mak' a belted knight,
A marquis, duke, an' a' that;
But an honest man's aboon his might—
Guid faith, he mauna fa' that!
For a' that, and a' that,
Their dignities, and a' that,
The pith o' sense, an' pride o' worth,
Are higher ranks than a' that."

But it was when he talked about surgery that she understood his conversation least and liked him best. Just a word dropped here and there and she felt the power of him, the keen brain, the capable hand, the nerve of steel. She might be a great actress, greatest of the American moderns, but here in his own business was her peer. She felt it. She knew it infallibly. And her heart did him reverence.

When he was coming to see her her imagination would follow him from the hospital to her hotel. "Now he is leaving the hospital," she would say, and she would see his big bulk cleave through the crowds on Broadway like a battleship through a weltering sea. "Now he is at Forty-third Street! Now he is crossing Sixth Avenue. Now he is in the hotel lobby!" Her heart would beat with excitement. Then the telephone would jangle. "Now he is here!"

Then she would put the glow from her eyes and her parted lips would close, and sedately she would meet him, putting out her hand.

"I didn't think you would come. I had no idea—"

Ofttimes there would be others in the sitting

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room when he arrived. A poet, perhaps, and an actress or two, perhaps a little comédienne with dark hair and pert manner, or a musical-comedy star. And his big bulk would overpower them. And they would look amazed as he spoke his strange language, speaking of the joys of the six-day bike race, and how Brocco, the Italian, nearly stole a lap on the field in a jam, or of the virtue of Joe Jeannette's left hand and of Dan "Porky" Flynn's qualities as a ring general, or of the match he had with Alec McGowan, the Scottish cobbler, over Wykagyl last Sunday. At times like that Annis felt like shaking him and proclaiming to the poet and the actress, "This man is a great surgeon!" when she saw that in their minds ran the exclamation, "What a damned funny bird!" and the question, "What is he doing here?" She felt a little hurt if he paid attention to the others, and she was silent during the conversation until he turned and addressed her. And all the time she watched him, especially if Hilda Leighton was there, the little dancer with the pungent, provocative face, to see whether he would "fall for her," as the Broadwayism goes. And she was delighted when she saw that all Hilda's wiles called forth was a look of stolid wonder. When he was talking about the six-day race, or the boxers, or a golf match so earnestly she felt at times she wanted to grab his head and hug it hard.

She did not want him to talk about Scots poetry to any but her, reciting those strange, archaic verses from *The Ballade of Guid Counsale* of James I. That was an inner part of him, a shrine, and she didn't want it shown to any one else.

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When he touched her hand she felt a strong, fateful current through her, and when he was helping her on with her wraps it was all she could do not to lean backward in his arms. The game was not played that way. She wanted that man, and perhaps he wanted her, too—wanted her as badly as she did him. And though it might be inevitable as she felt it was, yet one didn't throw down one's arms, even to the opponent Fate without a struggle. At least, no good soul did. And what would he think of her, if she did that? She blushed to the eyes. . . .

She would have to go warily. She sent him two tickets for her opening in the Westermarck production of "John Gabriel Borkman," and before the curtain sent for an usher.

"Will you see if there's a big, auburn-haired gentleman and a dark-haired woman with him in Dio2 and 103?" She felt certain that if there were a woman she would be small and dark, and she waited, strung at her highest pitch, until the girl returned.

"The gentleman's there, Miss Grand, but they ain't no lady along with him. The only thing on the seat beside of him is his hat and program!"

After that it was hard for her to play the tragic part she was cast for, because her heart was singing.

The next step was simple. She bought a photograph of a famous Brazilian airman, in his uniform and medals, and had it framed in silver and placed prominently on her sitting-room table. She knew it would catch Ian's eye the moment he entered. It did.

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"Nice-looking chap!" was Fraser's comment.

"Yes, isn't he?" Annis smiled. She turned her head toward a cunning-angled mirror. The next question came lightly as a comment on the weather.

"Friend o' yours?"

"Not exactly a friend," she told him. "A man who expects to marry me."

Her back was to him, so he let the whole of his amazed chagrin play over his features. He was like some one who has received a pail of cold water unexpectedly in the face. Annis was jubilant.

"But I haven't said I would"—his relief was patent—"yet," she added. Again his face fell.

"Then I knew I had him," Annis says.

III

She had imagined, as women will, a proposal of marriage from him under the most auspicious and pictorial circumstances—a full moon in the sky, luminous as a Chinese lamp, with all its hills and valleys marked, near as the next townland. And dogwood would be drifting in the hedges, and the smell of early summer in the air, of fluttering apple blossoms and the grass that is growing green. And there would be the minute sound of summer in the air, the rustle of a rabbit through the grass, and the soft plud of turtles as they splashed into a pond from the bank or from logs in the water. And he would tell her how he had dreamed about her in the daytime and the night, and how all through his life the thought and presence of her would guide him, as the star of the north guides the

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mariner over oceans of immense depth and great melancholy. And his words would move her until her whole being was liquid, and she would answer him by raising her mouth, like a blowing rose. . . .

They had decided to put on that dreadful piece of Coselschi's that paints the Borgia family in their high, vivid, sinister color, and Annis was to play Lucrezia. A great play, it had triumphed in critical Rome and Paris, and the New York producer, hot from three Russian successes, had decided to spare no money or talent or setting. From Paris came costumes, and Italy was ransacked for atmosphere that would permeate the theater and bring back for a few hours the Rome in which Alexander and Cæsar and Lucrezia lived.

From the instant she read the script of the play the part took hold of Annis and held her, as the eye of a serpent is said to hold a bird in thrall. And as she read of the daughter, the ghost of that dead woman rose with sea-green eyes and Spanish grace and insinuated itself toward her, like some jungle thing. And it strove to get inside her, and she thought of it nuzzling her breast with mephitic mouth and tongue and strange design.

"I will not play!" she exclaimed. But she knew if she went to the producer she could not tell of the thing she experienced. And were she to mention it he would laugh at her, and say: "It's only nervousness, Miss Grand. Every artist feels these doubts before a piece of work. But just think ahead, of the moment it's all over and the triumph assured—" and his eyes would sparkle. She could stand against that, and refuse the part bravely. But if she did

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that, there would be one more argument and that she could not withstand.

"Don't throw me down, Miss Grand," Jenkins would plead. "I've risked everything on this piece. You wouldn't throw me down?"

"No! I won't throw you down," she would answer. She knew that. So she went ahead.

Blocks from the theater that night she felt a strange, sinister atmosphere, as worshipers feel holiness approaching a lighted cathedral from afar. Strange remnants, flying bannerolds of evil, were in the wintry air. And before she had even dressed the part came to her.

"You look so strange, miss!" Her maid was half fearful.

"Get on!" Annis could hardly recognize her own voice.

She was oblivious to everything during the play. In the end she moved through the wings, unanswering whispered congratulations, passing blindly those who would stop her. She gained her dressing room utterly exhausted. She sat down.

"That's funny!" she said, suddenly. Then stood up.

There was a rapping at the door. In the theater the audience was cheering. The rapping became more insistent.

"Let no one in!" she told her maid.

About her was a strange red darkness. The familiar things of the dressing room faded out—the kindly light, the soft couch, the table of make-up, the mirror with its border of telegrams. The darkness swirled like a mist.

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"O my God!"

Faintly, as if her ears were dissolving, she heard her maid:

"You can't see her. You can't come in. No! No!! No!!!" Then the door slammed.

She thought for an instant she was dying, dissolving in air. So people died.

The red darkness about her became full of shapes, smiling at her terribly. There was one, an old man, with a pope's robes and a pope's tiara, and beneath it his face leered. And there was a history in his eyes of black magic practiced with obscene bloody rites, and of his daughter who was his wife. And he had wabbly, violet lips, and beside him stood his daughter with sea-green eyes and venomous bosom, and she smiled and advanced. And with them was a shade with shifting red eyes, a man that was not a man, but a wolf, and not a wolf, but a man. And behind both of them were shadows, whom she knew to be unborn children, and men and women done traitorously to death.

"Ian! Ian!" she cried.

She was going mad, going mad! she told herself. But she wasn't, she knew lucidly enough. These things were real. And they were advancing on her.

She tried to pray, and across her mind ran the sentence, "Our Father which art in heaven," but there was needed more than that simplicity. There were needed dreadful exorcisms locked up in the secret books of priests—

The shadow with the sea-green eyes had its head on her bosom and was mewing like a cat.

"Ian! Ian! Ian!" she screamed.

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The door crashed under his rush, and he was past the terrified maid and had her grasped tightly in his arms.

"What's wrong? Christ! Annis, what's wrong?"

For a fraction of an instant she seemed to go asleep in his arms.

"I could feel you calling me in the theater. What's wrong, little love, what's wrong?"

"There's nothing wrong," she whispered, quietly, "nothing now. Nothing wrong. Not now."

And then she suddenly broke into great gulping sobs of relief, like a child aroused out of a nightmare.

CHAPTER III

I

AND so they were married, and to Annis came the astounding discovery that fairy tales were true, after all. The Prince does rescue the Beauty in the Sleeping Wood, and they are married, and if they do not live happily ever after, they are ungrateful folk and have none to blame but themselves.

All her life up to this point had been a troubled sleep, it seemed to her, a succession of atrocious dreams, through which ran sinister figures, like the figures of her father, and meaningless, grotesque figures, like the vain men-folk of the stage, and strange inexplicable figures, like tragic actresses. But now she was awakened, and life took on its real proportions. It became a thing of color and harmony and sunshine, and shadow that was necessary to the sunshine.

In all her dreams of him she had not the faintest conception of how she loved her man. He had taken her in his arms and the macabre shadows fled. And then they were married and he loved her, taking her in his arms again, there burst within her such great sweetness that she trembled from head to foot. All the things the poets had ever written she understood now. All folks, too. She would think of Adam and Eve in the Garden and

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it would occur to her that they were only a prototype of Ian and herself, two straight, personable humans, male and female as created He them for His own profound purpose. And at other times in his arms she knew how Solomon loved Balkis, Queen of Sheba. There was nothing hidden to her now.

She was like some waif that had been taken up and brought into a warm and hospitable room. Everything was a novelty and an adventure. To have her own house, that narrow, three-story, quaint house wedged in between its pretentious neighbors in the Drive, that was the first home she had ever known. And the love she bore to it was an awesome and somewhat pitiful thing. They had furnished it with his money, and hers, also—she insisted on that as a necessity he must accede to—and she was never tired of wandering about the little drawing-room and dining room, gazing at things like the grandfather's clock and the great piano and the pictures—there were two Sorollas, and a painting of herself by Paul Helleu—and at times she would look around quickly, and when there was no one there kiss something surreptitiously.

"This is my own, my very own!" There would be tears in her eyes as she compared it to the mean hotels of her youth with her father, and the emptiness and publicity of the places where she herself had stayed.

She had a home now and a husband, a man to lean on and a man to love. Life had nothing further to offer her, she thought, beyond the permanency of this state. There was a great sweetness

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about being with Ian, and she wondered at times that people permitted them to be so. She was afraid that some officer of the law would step in and separate them. It was queer that the mere formality of marriage protected them. She could never quite feel that they were licensed to be together by Church and State. If society knew she were so happy, it would not permit it. No, it couldn't be true.

But they were together, that was certain. He was there by her side in the morning when she woke, still sleeping, one powerful arm thrown about her. And he was there at breakfast, sore-headed as a bear, and disinclined for the smallest civility until his morning meal was stowed away. For weeks she was fearful every morning that he was tired of her, that he had regretted his marriage, when he replied to her conversation in monosyllables.

"Good morning, dearest."

"Morn'."

"Did you sleep well?"

"Har-r-r-umph!"

"Is anything the matter?"

"No-gh."

There were mornings when she could hardly keep back her tears, imagining things.

Once she pursued her inquiries to the limit, until the misunderstandings had left her in a flood of laughter.

"Ian, you're ill this morning. You're so unlike your sweet self."

"For God's sake, leave me alone, woman! I'm no' human until I've had breakfast."

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After that he would go off to prepare for the day. And she could hear his unmusical voice through the house bellowing strange Scots songs:

“Wi’ a hi! hoo! honal! and a honal! hoo! hi!
Wi’ a hi! hoo! honal! and a honal! hoo! hi!
Wi’ a hi! hoo! honal! and a honal! hoo! hi!
It’s a brow thing, a clerk in an office.”

He would then go off on his daily affairs, to a hospital for an operation, or to a consultation, or to his office, and he would try to meet her for lunch at Sherry’s or the Knickerbocker or the little *confiseur’s* on Forty-fourth Street. And as they sat together people looked at them all the time—the men who had not heard she was married envying Ian, and the actresses who all knew of it wondering in their sophisticated little minds how long it would last.

She went to the theater at night, but no more as she concentrated on her part did the sinister shadows possess her. Their presence was always there, but they were baffled now, she knew. And when they became oppressive she had only to murmur the name Ian and immense strength rose in her. When she was there she was always thinking of him, loving him as she saw him in the morning, sore-headed as a bear, very like a schoolboy; loving him as she saw him go out on his errand to save life, confident, all but invincible; loving him as she felt him when he took her in his arms and made her body a reverberating dome of music. She wanted to pray all of the time, to thank Someone for him, and to ask Someone’s guidance in her task to make him happy. But set prayers she had

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forgotten and all of the Bible that came to her was the Song of Songs, which is Solomon's:

My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone;

The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;

The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.

O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs; let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely.

Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines; for our vines have tender grapes.

My beloved is mine, and I am his: he feedeth among the lilies.

Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.

II

He was a very fortunate man who had the entry to the Fraser household. There was great happiness there and great sanity. The door was big and black against the red of the bricks, and as you entered the hall and Florine, that little dark-haired maid who looked like an ingénue of musical comedy, took your hat and coat, it occurred to you, It is good for me to be here. In the fireplace of the drawing-room, if you could call it a drawing-room, which was so comfortable, logs were always crackling, and the brasses polished as on shipboard. You were certain of seeing music on the piano,

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because the piano was for use. And there was an immensity of books around, books to read, Mr. W. L. George jostling Mr. E. Philips Oppenheim, and the dignity of Anatole France imperiled by the proximity of Octave Mirbeau; and you were just as likely to find the *Police Gazette* in that room as you were to find the *Atlantic*. A fine, pleasant home.

And then Annis would come in to greet you, and no matter how well you knew her you were always asking yourself: "Can this be Annis Grand, this fine, buxom girl? This young matron who would grace a luncheon at the Ritz? Is this Macbeth's wife and Hedda Gabler and Lucrezia Borgia? It can't be." And yet it was.

"And how are you?" She would be glad to see you. "What are you doing in town? And won't you stay to dinner? Oh, don't mind your clothes!"

Perhaps Ian would be there, too.

"Hello! Where the hell did you come from?"

It seemed you met everybody at the Frasers' for dinner. People of importance had a knack of drifting in to that hospitable table. You might meet Mr. Arnold Bennett there, on his visits of exploration, or the district attorney. You would meet everyone of standing in New York, and those whose only importance was their position in the Social Register—Mrs. Victor Keene, for instance, she who had the mania for yellow evening dresses; old Jack Hawkesworth, that great figure of the Readville race track, who owned the beautiful brown mare, Leipsic Belle; Catherine Jones, who used to be such a feature of the Monday Germans

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of the Baltimore Assembly. And once you might meet Clarence Wichfield's wife who adopted twins, and of whom it was said she could never do things by halves. Or you might see a great golf pro. there—Willie Robertson, or the terrible Nipper Campbell. Any one. Everyone.

And the people said, as they will, that Fraser's rise in the surgical world was due immensely that first year to his wife. There was no person of importance whom she didn't contrive to have meet her husband. She knew they had only to see those calm eyes and capable hands, to hear that gruff and friendly voice, and they would think of him in their need or in their friends' need. People were right, for once, she did help him immensely. There was no trifle too small to overlook nor no strategy too big for her to undertake. There were no pains too great to take to help her husband, but she was doing only what any woman in love with a man would do.

And when she saw she was succeeding a great flood of happiness enveloped her. Surely life was sweet. He was to be the greatest surgeon of his time, and she was already the queen of the American stage—and both in their twenties. Was there anything more to be desired? Not one thing!

Everyone paid them tribute. Everyone came to their house, was glad to come—the rich and the poor, the famous and the unknown—and thinking over the number of people she knew who came to their house, there were three personalities who seemed to have a mysterious meaning for her. And they were not the most famous nor the most useful,

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nor the most anything as things go. There were perhaps twenty thousand of each of them in New York. But they stood out.

There was Georgia Wayne, that fair-haired young matron who was twenty-five, looked twenty-five, and had the wisdom of thirty-five years of age. Ian had operated on her for an appendix, and somehow she and her husband, Lafayette Wayne, who was an attorney downtown, had drifted into the hospitable circle of the Fraser home. A very pretty woman, but hard. Annis did not like her, and still she was there, with her strange meaning.

And there was Sheila Hopkins, that dark, slight, not pretty, but attractive intellectual girl, who had a college degree and worked for her living in a newspaper office downtown. She had interviewed Annis twice and Annis had invited her to dinner, and she was here ever since. Her frail body seemed to be a cockpit of warring feeling, and Annis pitied her. She was nearly clever.

And there was the auburn-haired, big, impressive Sappho Shores, whom not one but many people characterized immediately as "that big broad." She was the wife of a minor millionaire, Thomas Shores, and she was neither important enough financially nor sufficiently well born to belong to the class that are dubbed "The Four Hundred." She moved in the society of her like, and also in another and strange atmosphere where the newest shallower things in art and thought are handled, titillated, and passed by. Her studio—she had a second apartment which she called her studio—was the haunt of Second Avenue poets; and painters who

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followed the Impressionists and Cubists and the like with tottering footsteps; and parlor labor agitators who inveighed against the Interests and the System; and young playwrights who had taken a sort of course at Harvard—all poor and not at all deserving folk. She was brilliant, all but handsome, and Annis half despised her. She seemed to have a permanent high fever.

But these three women, Georgia Wayne, Sheila Hopkins, and Sappho Shores, were attached to her somehow, and had an esoteric meaning in her life. She and they constituted a sort of unit. They were a molecule of social New York, the component atom, and would travel together, and adhere were it ever so lightly—she and they. . . .

III

When Annis recalled it now, she had been thinking of marriage vaguely all her maiden days. Once, glancing through Proverbs, she had come to the prophecy King Lemuel had of his mother, and the praise and properties of a good wife had seemed very material to her—the considering of fields, and the laying of her hands to the spindle, the rising while it is yet night—that appeared more the duty of a servant than of a wife. And she had an idea of higher things than this, matters of soul and heart. Loving a man meant more than darning his socks, and warm arms more than a full meal. Surely that was evident. But then she had been looking at it abstractly.

All of a sudden the alchemy of love had come to her

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and transmuted these queer material services into evidences of love, and she understood now the joy there was in the little domesticities, the pride, the warm and high heart. How many years ago was it since Solomon lived? An immensity of time, back to the days when genii were, and black magic, and Balkis, Queen of Sheba, with her golden face and Arab eyes. Tyre and Sidon were great cities then, that were but a name now, and the Pharaohs ruled in Egypt, and Christ was not, nor Mahmud, nor Cæsar, nor Charlemagne. The face and history of a planet had changed, but one thing had not changed the smallest iota, not a particle, not a shading. And that made Adam and Eve more plausible than Darwin's apes—the action of a woman on a man, and the reaction of a man to a woman:

“The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her,” King Lemuel's mother told him, “so that he shall have no need of spoil.

“She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. . . .”

Book II
THE WANDERING FEET

CHAPTER IV

I

"WILL you run out to Leonia to-day, Georgia?" Her husband, opposite her, having breakfast in the little hotel on Brooklyn Heights, was wolfing his early meal in the manner of those who must be at an office or catch a train by a certain time. The coffee was too hot for him, the waiter too slow. Every so many minutes he would pluck his watch from his vest pocket and glance at it hurriedly.

"I can't make it to-day, Lafe. Honest I can't."

"We got to get somewhere quick. I can't go on paying the rates at this hotel."

"Why worry all the time, Lafe? We'll get some place."

He had to rush, and he was nearly in a panic.

"I tell you I can't afford it. Can't you put off this card party and go out there and look for a bungalow?"

"Hush!" Georgia Wayne's voice took on a sharp little fighting note. "Don't let people hear you. The waiter!"

Lafayette swallowed one last gulp of coffee and stood up, wiping his lips with his napkin. He reached down and kissed her on the cheek.

"I'll call you up when I get to the office," was his parting word. "We got to do something."

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"Good-by, honey," she called. "Honey, good-by." All at the near-by tables turned and looked at her, and smiled, because she was very pretty. She looked so well there, waving her tiny handkerchief just as a young bride ought to look. She had been three years married and people still took her to be a young bride.

"By!" Wayne grunted as he went out. "'By!"

She turned and resumed her grapefruit—he had nearly finished his breakfast when she came down, and when that was done with and she was waiting for coffee and eggs, she turned and looked out of the window. Autumn had come to the city like a visitor of great dignity and was now in the streets, an invisible, ruddy being. The sun sparkled more joyously than in summer, and with more reason, for a tinge of frost was to be overcome. Without, there was a feeling of charm to the swept streets and the little trees in their sort of cages. And the Brooklyn houses were squat and inviting, and very like home, and especially mellow. Men hurried through the streets on their way to the station at Borough Hall, or up to the quaint little trolley on the Bridge where one might ride twice for a nickel. Armies and battalions of folks were passing over the Bridge now, going to their business, and there was an immensity of life and purpose in the air, as though all these people were throwing off radiations of energy. Over the river fussy little tugs were trotting to and fro, now dragging great lines of barges, now piloting some gigantic liner to its appointed place, now patronizingly shouldering a schooner or barkentine to its slip. And there

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were tendrils of vapor in the air, like fleece torn from clouds by the hurricane, and a hooting and a rumbling and a shrieking from the whistles of boats. And across the river, in lower New York, were the great buildings where men worked, like hives of industrious honeybees. Then farther off was Fifth Avenue, in the daytime a broad, dignified street, beautiful as a Venetian canal. It had immense stores, and strange foreign treasure houses, and the homes of the millionaire folk. Here the Library crouched, and farther up a cathedral rose into the air like a threatening spear. And Sherry's was there for the freemasonry of society, and Delmonico's for the cosmopolitans, and the Plaza for all who had money. And down Fifth Avenue tripped the handsomest women in the world, dressed as smartly as Viennese, and with glittering, hard faces. And if we were to stand at Forty-second Street and Fifth Avenue, at one time or another all the important people would pass that point. That was a proven thing.

Westward from that was Broadway, a welter of color and life. Restaurants and cabarets and theaters, no city in the world could show so much abundance in such a space. Here life rippled like an athlete's muscles beneath the skin. There were clever, well-groomed men and women whom no city's women could touch. In the daytime along that street one felt as though one belonged to a great movement, a great band of people united somehow—a caste, a man-and-woman-of-the-worldliness. And at night it became a revel of *mi-carême*, an enchanted street such as Scheherazade would have described in her

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tales. When one got out of the Subway going to a theater a thrill would run through the body, and one felt like pressing a partner's arm and saying, with excited glee: "We are here. We are here. Don't you understand? It is here that we are. The Great White Way!"

She smiled at the thought of Leonia, or any other suburb of the kind—a bungalow with an inept servant, and in winter a mournful prospect of empty lots for sale, of snow and decayed trees. There would be an immense loneliness there. To go to and from it one took the Subway, then the ferry, then one fought for a place on a street car. What did they do in Leonia, anyway? And Lafayette wanted her to go out and live there.

She couldn't, she wouldn't leave New York. She just felt it was a physical and mental impossibility. To New York she was joined. She was like a woman out of an old mythology, one of the sisterhood of Danaë who wedded a shower of gold, and of the Phœnician Europa who loved the great white bull. She thought she loved and had married Lafayette Wayne, but in reality she loved and was married to the city of New York. . . .

II

They always refer to Georgia Wayne as a Southern beauty. Beauty she is, there is no escaping that—she is not a small woman, but she is not a big one; "a good practical size" she calls herself. Of her kind she is as near perfection as can reasonably be. She is plump, but not thick, nor will she

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ever be thick—her slender wrists and ankles are guaranties against that. Her head is poised like the head of a flower, and her face has the natural beauty of some hardy and yet strange bloom. Her hair is fair, but there are reddish tints to it, and under different lights it gives strange lusters and there is a great amount of it. Her brow is calm and small above her sherry-colored eyes, the strange, intriguing tint the French call *des yeux de lionne*. Her nose is tilted a little, and her mouth is small, full, and pursed like a bursting bud. A woman will pick that face to pieces, dwelling on this irregularity, that fault, denying it any beauty, but conceding a provocative quality. But a man will call her a beauty every time.

Beauty she is in her own peculiar way, but Southern she is not. You never hear her either affirm or deny the Southern extraction. She was born in Bridgeport of a father who dabbled in finance, his business being real estate, and a mother who was just a wife to her husband—a nondescript New England woman, fit for cleaning the house, buying materials for a meal, nursing her husband when he caught cold, and being stupidly intimate with him. Her father was a small man with thinning gray hair, gray eyes, a robin's-egg complexion, and pince-nez on a chain. You could conceive of him doing nothing else but selling either insurance or real estate. He was truculent in his house, as small men are.

And yet this small man did something remarkable for one of his type. A distant relative, dying, left him seventy-five thousand dollars (very probably

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there was no one else to leave it to) and Jedediah Knapp plunged into Wall Street in place of salting it into gold-edged securities and rot-proof investments, and by supernal luck he raised it to a quarter-million. Then he decided to leave Bridgeport.

"We are going to New York, Amelia," he told his wife. "New York needs me."

"But, Jed—"

"We are going to New York."

She whimpered a little. New York scared her.

"Woman, did you hear me? We are going to New York."

They went. And there Georgia, eighteen then, got her first taste of New York. In Bridgeport, at school, she was already a great belle, but she had formed no affectionate ties, always dreaming of what New York might bring her, and none ever asked her hand in marriage. She seemed too young. When she was eighteen she seemed fifteen.

Of course they knew nobody in New York. The friends of his youth—the Bridgeporters who had come to New York—were in no great standing—honest, sterling people, but hardly travelers with a coming millionaire, and Knapp had already dreams of the Union League Club and the Monmouth County Hunt. Once he had shown what he was—the Napoleon of finance, a Stratford paper had called him—New York society would be only too glad to welcome him. In the meanwhile he and his wife and his daughter Georgia patronized Broadway. They were at every theater, every entertainment.

And then the inevitable happened. For one of his

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size Jedediah Knapp made quite too much of a fuss downtown (this was 1907), calling too much attention to himself. A small terrier has no right in a compound of stately bulls and bears. If he keeps his mouth shut and slinks away from danger or sits up in a pretty attitude, he may get by. He may even pick up quite a nice collection of the bones of the deceased animals. He may earn the distinction of being the only terrier in the forest. But Jed Knapp was not content to keep quiet, slink away, and beg prettily. He growled, barked, and snapped until he became a damned nuisance. So one day a bull lifted him deftly into the air on its horns and tossed him high, and as he came down a bear caught him a slap of its lightning paw. And that was the end of him.

Of course they allowed him car fare. Out of his shattered holdings he could scrape together enough to make two thousand dollars a year. But he was cured of the idea that New York needed him. So it was up to him to go somewhere. To Bridgeport he would not return—the little runt had spirit enough. So he chose Jacksonville, Florida. It sounded well to New England. He had retired from business and purchased a residence in Florida.

So to Jacksonville they went, his wife weeping bitterly. New York was bad enough, but to go to Florida was to go to the end of the world. In New York there was the possibility of running up to Bridgeport for a week-end, meeting co-members of these wing circle and the Tennyson Society, mingling with the Mothers' Club, and being exhorted unto righteousness by the Rev. Baxter Judd, that

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sacred and inspired priest, who comforted her somehow. But Florida was *in partibus infidelium*, a land of negroes and of cotton and alligators and the like. It was a rooting up of all her being. It was very funny, but it was a great tragedy. To Knapp, Jacksonville implied the chaste grandeur of Elba.

When Georgia went her eyes shone like topazes, firmly, full of purpose, and her teeth were set and her chin tilted. Bridgeport meant nothing to her, nor Jacksonville, either, nor any part of the continent, nor any part of the world. Sweeter to her were Abana and Parphar, rivers of Damascus, than all the waters of Israel. And Georgia's Damascus was the city of New York.

III

She had a voice, a sweet contralto, and she could dance better than any girl in Jacksonville, so when her father died, and was buried there, she thought of coming to New York. The Sunday newspaper supplements were continually showing portraits of stage beauties, and she told herself that she was as good looking as any of them, and better than most. She came also by a magazine somehow—the *Police Gazette*—a pink illustrated paper abounding in portraits of pugilists and beauties of the burlesque and music-hall stage in working costumes, and she had as shapely legs as any of them. Her voice, too—everyone had praised that. In an account of a local concert, the *Times-Union* had praised extravagantly her singing of "Mighty Lak' a Rose" and the great aria of "Samson and Delilah."

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So she dreamed dreams of returning to New York in any capacity on the stage and being a personage on that Broadway she loved. Surreptitiously she applied for a hearing to the manager of a burlesque show which was visiting town, a fat, kindly man with a billycock hat on the side of his head, a paunch, and a cigar with the band still on it rolling from side to side of his capacious mouth.

"All right. I'll listen to you, sister."

He gave her a costume which made her blush for the moment and hesitate, but the prospect of his approval thrilled her, and she came out on the empty stage, singing, to the accompaniment of the show pianist. The manager sat back of the hall and listened. He came down to the brass orchestra box and spoke to her when she had finished.

"You sing all right, sis. You got a small voice, but you make all you can out of it. Your shape's fine and you're a good looker, but you ain't there, sis, you ain't there."

"But if I have all those, I must be there."

"No! no! They's tons of women 'ain't got the voice, nor the looks, nor the shape, but they're there, sis, and you ain't."

"I don't understand you."

"It's hard to explain, but it's just this: you're a good amateur, but you won't make a professional. There's thousands like that, sis. Take my advice and leave it be."

But she wouldn't take his advice. She couldn't understand the intangible criticism. He followed her to the door very kindly.

"Now what do you want to bother with the

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stage for? You look to be a nice kind of girl, and there ain't nothing in this business for a girl like you. Take it from an old stager: just marry a man and make him happy. 'Tain't so showy as the stage, but there's less heartache. Just remember, a good wife must be a good actress, too. 'Tisn't your art that's biting you?" he asked, shrewdly.

"Frankly"—she turned to him with a smile; she felt his sincerity—"I want to go to New York."

"Oh, I thought so. Well, I'll tell you, sis, they's a million like you, and some of them go. And some of them curse the day they went. Leave it be."

"I'm set on going."

"Well, good luck to you, sis, but take my advice and leave it be."

And gone she would have, too, only her mother seemed satisfied a little now, having achieved resignation. People had been kind to her in Jacksonville and her man was buried there. She had loved him immensely in her own strange way, and all she thought of now was being by her daughter until something happened, and then laying her bones alongside the pinchbeck Napoleon in his exiled grave. She was a thin, fearful woman, who trembled at the thought of anything new. All she wanted in her life was to visit his grave and to spend a while each day in the public square at Jacksonville, enjoying the sunshine, and hearing the band, and watching with a child's half-frightened, half-hypnotized interest the great alligator in its tank, which somehow reminded her of missionaries.

Georgia fiddled at a proposal to go North.

"Wouldn't you rather be in New York, mother,

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than down here? You would meet lots of people in New York, you know, and you could go up to Bridgeport occasionally."

Her mother just whimpered, and the girl put her arms about her, her heart swelling with pity.

"My dear! my dear! you'll just stay where you like so long as you're halfway happy."

She could wait. Sooner or later she would go to New York. That was fated. That she knew as certainly as that she would die. She took singing lessons in Jacksonville from an old maestro who had come South for the sake of his health, and he told her more gently what the burlesque manager had told her, but him she didn't believe, either. She would work hard, harder than ever, and she must succeed. It was a strange thing, but true, that she thought of no other way of getting there than by working. The simplest way out—to marry a New-Yorker—had never occurred to her, and when Lafayette Wayne appeared and he fell in love with her, and she thought she was in love with him, the simplicity of the whole business struck her with the force of divine revelation.

IV

Wayne had come to Jacksonville to the athletic meet. He had just left Pennsylvania University with all his track honors thick upon him, and he was willing enough to come South for expenses, "borrowing" his fare, for a holiday in Florida. A thin, lanky lad of twenty-four, with a cadaverous Yankee face, he looked the type of the track athlete

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and the holder of two world's records. Already in his strong face there was growing the determination that would make him some day, should God please, a great lawyer and a big man. There was a dreaminess in his eyes and brow that bespoke the idealist, there was a force in the chin and mouth that would link that idealism with a practical quality—and these two things make for success. And about his mouth there used to play a full, happy smile.

From the moment he laid his eyes on her he thought she was the loveliest thing in the world, and she spoke so prettily to him that his already warmed heart glowed to her. She admired him and rated him at his true worth as an athlete without the calf-like adoration of the ordinary girl. She had brains and he had brains and they liked each other.

He had intended going farther South, visiting Ormond and Palm Beach, Long Key and Miami, but he stayed in Jacksonville and went out playing golf there, and running down to St. Augustine occasionally. Jacksonville, he voted, was not half bad. Why go farther south? It was good for him to be there.

He had been a very poor boy, and there had been little chance for him to enjoy himself or to meet girls until now. At school he had to work before and after hours. At college he had to pay his own way and study, and for the year he studied law in Philadelphia he rarely went out. But now he had been given his chance. A New York firm had seen in him the opportunity of drawing to themselves, through his prominence in athletics, a great portion of the work of the Metropolitan Athletic Club. They

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had given him a place in their office at sixty dollars a week. So all the world lay before him, a pleasant, conquerable place.

He was impetuous, with a dignity. Georgia seemed to like him, so he saw no reason why he shouldn't call to take her to hotel dances. She would look up at him, smiling, when she had tripped downstairs.

"You are so tall and rangy, and I am so short and plump, we look like a vaudeville team going out."

But he only smiled. To him there was no discrepancy in size, all was fitting, more than fitting, marvelous.

Between dances they wandered out to the public square, to the little grating where the old crocodile drowsed under a moon that was immensely full and immensely near. The soft Southern dusk was about like a beneficent wind. They were silent together, bursting into occasional unimportant speech.

"How do you like to be a lawyer?"

"Oh, I like it, all right."

Then more silence and they looked down together.

"Are you going to practice in Philadelphia?"

"No!" he told her. "No! In New York."

"In New York?" Her ears pricked up immediately at the beloved name. "In New York?" Then she sighed. "I have always wanted to go to New York."

His hand was halfway out to take hers impetuously, yet he was afraid.

When he left her home at night they would part with a snatched kiss, or a light given one, and, laughing, she would leave him, running away to hide her

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embarrassment. And then he would walk off feeling suddenly awakened, and tramp for an hour through the suburbs, or down the length of the piers, over long strange streets with an immensity of pawnshops and fortune-tellers' booths. He minded nothing. Queer inspirations swept over him, and he felt an unlimited sense of power. He would find himself addressing aloud an imaginary jury, pleading eloquently on behalf of a hypothetical murderer. Or he would find himself addressing his congressional constituents, stating with great warmth and firmness what his stand was on this matter of foreign relations. Or as Governor of the State of New York repulsing boldly the delegate of Tammany. Then he would come to himself and laugh loudly.

"Why, you poor cuckoo!"

But the night he mentioned New York, when he said good-by he put his arms about her and she leaned against him, just the slightest relaxation, and her lips parted to his kiss for an instant. He felt, somehow, a holy thing.

"Good night," he said, "and thank you!"

"When you are gone, Lafe, I shall be lonely."

They stood apart, and as she spoke he made to take her in his arms again, but she retreated.

"No! no!" she said. "No! no!" and then, "Good night, Lafe," very softly, and she was gone.

He straightened his shoulders and walked through the town. As he walked he would stop suddenly as little flaws of emotion struck him as cat's-paws hit a ship's sails.

"Oh, my dear!" he would half gasp, and again, "God!" and then, "Georgia!"

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He had become suddenly, fatally, immersed in love for her.

V

He began to dream now of possessing her, and that resolved itself in him into terms of marriage. Always at the back of his mind he had seen himself married—a great blond woman he had fancied in his visions, with two pretty children at her knee and himself beside her, firm, upright, the noblest type of public official. But never before had he thought of it concretely. And now different visions came into his head, of having breakfast with her—joy coming with the morning, of mingling those two lives of theirs until they were both one sweet harmony. They would be together of an evening before a great fireplace, she sitting on the arm of his chair, and both dreaming dreams.

The hours dragged by with such terrible reluctance until he saw her again. He could hardly credit her tender feeling, and when he saw her again he was more surprised than ever. The smile she greeted him with was so deep and tender—it seemed as if through the night her feeling toward him had become intensified and ardent. Between them there was a secret, beautiful understanding.

They went to a little dance hall across the St. Johns River that night, but they danced little. They wandered out in the moonlight, and leaned over the railings and looked out over the water. He didn't even take her hand.

"Georgia, I've known you only ten days and I seem to have known you all my life." His words

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came stumblingly. But she was silent, looking down at the moving river.

"You may be lonely after me, Georgia, but it 'll be nothing to the loneliness that I'll know." And still she was silent.

"I wonder"—he could phrase nothing that he wanted to say—"I wonder if you know what I mean."

In tones he could hardly hear she was singing:

"Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix comme s'ouvrent les fleurs aux baisers de l'aurore. . . . Mais ô mon bien aimé, pour mieux sécher mes pleurs, que ta voix parle encore!"

"Oh, Georgia!" He was hurt, thinking she was treating his words flippantly, but when she raised her head he saw her face was shining with tears and warm with shame.

"That song means," she said in the darkness, "My heart opens at your voice as the flowers open at the kisses of the dawn. . . . But O my beloved, to dry my tears, let your voice speak on! . . ."

"My dear! my dear!" His tenderness enveloped her like a cloak.

When he left her that night they were definitely engaged to be married, and as he went home to his hotel his heart and brain pounded with the joy of revelation. He was to be married, and they were to live happily ever after. To live happily ever after! And then the dreadful caution of the poor reached out and caught him. Was it wise? Wouldn't it have been wiser to marry a woman with money—as his mother had said: "Fall in love where money is. Keep your heart free until you get to that

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place"? He had seen terrible poverty as a child, and was utterly scared of it.

And then a high wave of optimism carried him forward. Why she was a great asset! With a bride like that everyone would help them. Everyone seemed to help young married people, to account it a privilege to do so. The firm would give him a raise, undoubtedly. His clever Georgia would help him immensely. People would come to their home, and how could they, after that, give their law business to anyone else? How could they? Married to her he was worth five thousand a year more. And they would spend so much. For all that people laughed, there was a great deal of truth to the saying that two could live as cheaply as one—house rent, for instance, and they wouldn't have to go out for meals and tip waiters and so forth. . . .

At any rate, he didn't care about the money. When a man meets a woman and they both love each other that's all there's to it. He married her, poor or rich. The poor man has as little protection against love as the rich against death. When either comes, it comes, that's all. Didn't the Bible say something about Love is as strong as Death? Yes, the Bible said that, Love is as strong as Death.

At any rate, with her by his side, he could do anything, he felt. A man needed an inspiration like that to get on. He needed a wife to help him get on. Who ever heard of a successful bachelor? Hey? Who ever heard of that?

Nobody!

Well, there you are!

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VI

“. . . which holy estate Christ adorned and beautified . . .” the minister was droning, “. . . and is commended of Saint Paul to be honorable among all men: and therefore is not by any to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly. . . .”

It was to have been a very simple wedding, but the rapidity of the courtship, and the fame of Wayne and Georgia’s beauty, had aroused a sentiment of romance all through the city. The church was crowded.

“I require and charge you both . . .” the solemnization went on. Georgia’s mother whimpered a little in her usual fear.

“Georgia, wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded husband, to live together after God’s ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou obey him, and serve him, love, honor, and keep him in sickness and in health, and, forsaking all others, keep thee only unto him? . . .”

“I will.”

And so Georgia was married and came to New York.

CHAPTER V

I

SHE had been in New York only six months when a burst appendix laid her in the hospital, and Ian Fraser operated. And she met Annis Fraser.

Annis had the habit of visiting her husband's patients. With the wisdom of a woman in love, which is more than the wisdom of the serpent, she knew that a word or two from her would do more for Ian's reputation than all his skill with the scalpel. Meeting the famous Annis Grand made folks proud and talkative. Annis had been too long with the theater not to know the immense value of publicity.

I don't think her husband liked it. He had the impression it was not exactly professional. He cared not one jot for money or fame; he wanted to do his work. Also he felt it was unfair to the other surgeons who had not wives as beautiful and famous as Annis Grand. But he never dared mention it to her. She was so pleased at being able to do something to help him—so set on doing it, too. If there had been a human being in her husband's way it would have been quite possible for Annis to murder him, and she would have accounted it to herself for righteousness.

She entered the room where Georgia was and went up to her.

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"How do you do?"

Georgia knew her from her photographs and flushed with sudden embarrassment.

"I'm afraid you've made a mistake, Miss Grand."

"No mistake at all," Annis smiled. "I am not only Annis Grand; I am Mrs. Ian Fraser."

"Oh!" Georgia gasped. "Doctor Fraser's wife!"

She only half heard Annis talk to her. Her eyes went greedily over the details of the great actress's face and figure—the eyes blue as cornflowers, the hair that glistened like a golden helmet, the impelling presence. From Annis came that strange, indefinable charm that is a woman's who is loved—the ringing, unheard harmony. The great kindness in her face made Georgia's heart expand.

"Do you know, Mrs. Fraser, all my life I have been wanting to go on the stage in New York?"

"But you found something better. You got married."

"But one can be married and be famous, too. You are."

"I had to work for my living for ten years before I was married," Annis smiled. "And all the fame it brought me has not made up for the loss of girlhood and all the things you've had. My dear, if eight years ago I had had to choose between fame and a happy marriage, the world would never have heard of Annis Grand. My dear, don't you think that marriage is more of a career than anything in the world?"

"I don't know." Georgia was puzzled. It was strange to hear Annis Grand talk in this manner, she who had New York at her feet; not only New

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York, but the world; whose name flashed on Broadway and was potent on Fifth Avenue.

"I do know. There's many a good wife needs to be a good actress, as good as any on the stage."

"Why, that's curious!" Georgia smiled. She remembered what the burlesque manager had said to her, and it was the same thing Annis Grand had said.

"But I would never have made good, Mrs. Fraser." Georgia wanted to tell her of the experience in Jacksonville. It seemed funny now, going to a burlesque showman for a tryout, in a pair of tights that were all but too small for her, and singing "Mighty Lak' a Rose." Mighty like sausages bursting through their coverings! "A—a theatrical manager once said to me, I wasn't there."

"When you get better"—Annis rose to go—"you must come up and see me and tell me all about it. You must come to dinner," she invited, suddenly, "and bring your husband. I love to know young married couples. There is something beautiful and adventurous and mystical about them. They are like ships that put out to sea."

II

Where but in New York could Georgia have met the great Annis Grand, she asked herself, Where but in New York, the premier city? And she had come to see her, just like that! And she had been invited to dinner with her! New York was fairyland.

There was no end to its magic quality. Once she had seen a great Italian tenor on Broadway, and on

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a Sunday she had seen Mr. Rockefeller walking from his church, just like an ordinary human being. And once Mr. James Hackett, the actor. Nowhere else in the world could one see people like that, she was convinced. And the thousands of others one met, at least one quarter of them were important folk, did one only know their names. One could see it in their faces. And often people turned and looked at her as she flitted through the streets with her eager face. Undoubtedly they thought she was some one of importance, too, and the impression thrilled. For whom did they take her? Perhaps for one of the singers at the opera.

She had been a trifle disappointed, after the first month of marriage passed. Lafe and she had taken a room in a rather pretentious boarding house near Seventy-second Street, claiming they had been married for years. But that subterfuge was easily seen through, and they were for a month or more the cynosure of all eyes.

For a while she had enjoyed the people there; they were all so new to her. They were all important people in a petty way, and they were New-Yorkers. There was Adolf Ginsburg, for example, a big, florid man, high up in bastard Masonry, a builder, and Arthur McGowan, slick, clean, up to the minute, a salesman of bonds. His conversation was of all the great figures of Wall Street—Harri-man, Hill, James R. Keene, of whom he spoke as though he were their intimate. There was a sort of editor of the New York *Tribune*—a copy reader his technical name was—a bald-headed, huddle-back man who chewed peppermints and was very

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superior. People often tried to talk to him, but his superiority froze them. At the mention of other newspapers he would smile and say, "Oh yes," and one felt one had committed a bad break.

There was a man called Smith, who tutored in English literature at some woman's college, and when one called him "professor" he would gently correct them to "doctor." And there was a florid wine merchant there, whose conversations were in the main about parties at Rector's and Jack's. He had been thrown out of Jack's at three in the morning by the famous flying wedge of waiters, and he considered this a necessity for the entry into New York, as baptism is a necessity for ritual religion. He was continuously referring to matrimony as "love, honor, and—oh, *bébé!*" The women boarders did not in the main know what he meant, but his tone and look made them extremely uncomfortable.

Of the women there, there was Ginsburg's wife, a massive Teutonic woman who played a fiendish game of bridge and had all the bridge conventions at her finger tips; and Mrs. Tresselby, the wife of the wine agent, a thin woman with graying hair and a quivering under lip—most of the folk there thought it was a shame that good old Sam should be tied to such a prune. Occasionally the copy reader's fiancée would come to a meal there, an acidulous spinster, graduate of some woman's college, who worked on the same newspaper as he did. She was not the ordinary type of newspaper woman, she was careful to divulge; she was a lady. They were writing a play together.

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There was a fat, florid little woman who ran a tea shop in the Fifties, and was fond of poetry, preferably Byron. There was the dark-haired secretary to a big business man downtown, a reserved girl, reported to be very clever. She made forty dollars a week. There was an actress there, an old character woman, who came and went hurriedly and replied courteously to questions, but never volunteered information. There was a fair-haired, bright, giggling stenographer, who seldom came to meals. Her furs were splendid, and once the hushed whisper went through the house that she wore blue-silk underwear, and it was reluctantly admitted that she was one of those women . . .

And there were others.

At first these people seemed to Georgia the salt of the world; they were of New York—they were New York. But in a month or so they palled on her. For all that they ate together, slept under the same roof, were all compellingly intimate as one family, still they were strangers. In the morning they went off each to his or her own affairs, and after dinner they retired, each to his or her own cubicle, or went out, though this was very occasional. Georgia couldn't understand why they didn't foregather to be hilarious, or be out in the great current of hysterical pleasure that flowed through the city with the coming of the night. After a little while, when the glamour of bridehood had worn off her, they accepted her very casually.

"Oh, Mrs. Wayne! How do? Any mail for me? No? Oh well!" And they would climb wearily upstairs with a book from the public library around the corner.

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A few of them would remain after dinner in the parlor.

"Seen 'The Garden of Allah'?"

"Uh-huh!"

"Wonder how they make that sandstorm?"

"Can't be sand."

"Heard a man say it was Cream of Wheat."

"That 'u'd be very expensive."

"Sweep it up after each performance."

"Uh-huh."

Then there would be a silence. Then:

"Seen Eddie Foy?"

"Uh-huh."

"All them kids. What do you know about that?"

"They ain't his, dearie. No man's such a sucker."

"Guess he hires them."

"Uh-huh."

The boarding house disappointed Georgia, though it was the best of its kind. Jacksonville, she reluctantly told herself, was much better than this. There were always dances there. People were coming from the North on every train and whizzing through the city to the hotels, staying often overnight before departing southward, and on every Clyde and Merchants' and Miners' boat there were people coming. And the band was always playing in the square. Here she heard no bands at all. If you wanted anything in New York you had to pay money. The daughters of the horseleech populated the city, crying, "Give, give." At Jacksonville there was always something doing, a convention, a run to St. Augustine, a trip across the ferry—even the alligator farm and the golf links. And she missed the Florida moon.

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She had thought in her brief courtship at Jacksonville that wherever she went in New York she would be welcomed with open arms. New York nights she had seen as a succession of dances; of young girls floating in dreamy waltzes; of herself standing by a grand piano in some not pretentious drawing-room, singing "*Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix*," and looking at her husband with that song in her eyes, and music would stop and she would jump into her husband's arms and go asleep on his shoulder, sleep not coming for a little while because of her thinking how pleasant the night had been and of the compliments that had been paid her.

The voice in the drawing-room resumed.

"I seen Doctor Cook is going to lecture at Carnegie Hall."

"'Ain't he got his nerve with him!"

"You know, dearie, Peary called him a liar, said he never was to the North Pole; but who knows if Peary was there himself? They was always something queer to that."

"I heard lots o' people say that same thing."

"There must be something to it, if lots o' people say it."

III

Her first two months of matrimony were a delight to Georgia. Her mother had given her a thousand dollars, and she insisted that Lafe should use it. He wanted to bank it for her, but she persuaded him against it.

"I want a honeymoon, a real honeymoon," she

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insisted. "You're only young once. Lafe, let's have something to look back upon."

He let her have her own way to a certain extent, but two-thirds he insisted on her not spending.

For at least three nights a week they went out for dinner and to the theater, and it seemed to Georgia that she only lived until the night would come and they would go down that gold-and-emerald lane of Broadway. She liked the hurry and bustle to get to the restaurant, the dreamy tunes the orchestra played, the hush of the theater, and then when the theater was over there was supper in a cabaret. They would sit down at a little table, escorted by a polite but hurried waiter, and while they were eating the band would break into the staccato, challenging measure of the Argentine tango, and two lithe figures, a man and a woman, would dance, now stately as in a gavotte, now whirling in an ecstasy that made her throat dry, so gripping it was. And when it was over she would clap her hands.

"I love it, I love it!"

Once or twice she saw Lafe's face look a trifle foolish and bewildered as he was paying the bill, and, leaning over, she would see the amount of it, and her heart would reproach her.

"Poor boy!"

And then she would decide that they wouldn't go out again, that she must stay in and save. It wasn't fair to Lafe. Poor lad, he was worried. Though he said nothing to her, she knew it. But after a couple of nights alone in the boarding house, her whole entity would itch for an evening down-

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town. They were both of them silent people and silent lovers. He was never a conversationalist. In the bottom of his being there was a great vein of seriousness, and he took things hardly. She had been an only child, and her own thoughts had been a lot to her, so conversation did not come easy to her, either, except for the stilted, stereotyped matter a young girl must know. And their loving was dumb, a flare of passion and then silent peace. She would pillow her chin on his shoulder.

"Don't talk, Lafe. Don't move."

It seemed as if some explosive force had lifted them into another plane where there was tremendous harmony, and it was some little time before they came to the solidity and banality of earth.

But when they sat apart they were just as silent and in their separate dream, his of work and deserved fame, hers of the welter of iridescent, blatant life, a mile and a half away, from which she had been exiled, it seemed to her. And the thought that other women at that moment were flowing along the magnificent current hurt her, made her restless. She was like a woman jealous of other women being with her lover, and she away. She would plead with her husband:

"Lafe dear, let's go downtown," she would whisper. "Just once. Lafe dear!"

"I don't know that we can, Georgia." He had thought to make a stand against it.

"I know it's wrong, very wrong, Lafe, but—let's go."

"You remember, Georgia, you said we weren't to go out any more."

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"I know, Lafe, I know I said it, but—let's go. Just once, Lafe dear, just once."

She pleaded so prettily, and she was so pretty, her eyes aglow at the prospect of going out, that he couldn't resist, and it would go on again.

Once a week or even more Lafe and she would go to the apartment of his friends in the law office, or to men he had known in other lines of work, going out in the country sometimes as far as Englewood or as far as Rye. But these visits were not a success. Lafe's friends and their wives were on the whole a boring lot, and one got the impression that the dinner was an event to them. Dinner always consisted on these occasions of fried chicken, and there would be ice cream and lukewarm coffee in demi-tasses. The men would crack jokes about marriage, not quite tactful jokes as far as their wives were concerned, and Georgia always felt that the women were worrying as to whether there would be enough of this or that to go around. Then dinner would be over and the host and Lafe would talk interminably about the law or politics, wondering what was going to happen at the forthcoming election, and repeating the sound things Mr. Taft had said on his recent tour, and arguing about Colonel Roosevelt, who, they all seemed to consider, was not a sound man, some going as far as to suggest he should be hanged, or exiled to Africa for life, anything so long as he was kept out of presidential politics. In the main the dinner parties were rather sad affairs.

To Georgia, who had eaten at so many first-class restaurants, the food was pretty terrible, and

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she who had heard the witticisms of Ed Wynne and Al Jolson was conceivably bored by the execrable puns of the suburbanites. She felt she ought to like these things, and blamed herself for not being more gracious, but she couldn't, she simply couldn't.

"Georgia, do you think we could run out to Weehawken on Thursday night and see the Schreiners?"

"Oh, Lafe dear, what do we want to go out there for?"

"They were very kind to me before I met you."

"And I'd love to meet them for that, but wait, Lafe, until summer comes, and when it will be pleasant going out. But now—oh, honey, don't ask me! Please don't."

"All right, pet." But he was disappointed. Anyone could feel that. But she couldn't bring herself to go.

At times she would think to herself of her dreams in the abrupt wooing of Jacksonville, and it would puzzle her immensely as to why those dreams, that seemed so plausible there, had suddenly become impossible, in a mental way. She had thought then of going to some school for cookery in New York, a big, bright kitchen with shining pots and pans and a score or more of women in gingham dresses posing over them. There she thought she would learn cookery, so that in her own house she might superintend meals. And she could see herself in a little apartment where the sun shone and a bird sang, polishing her little household gods and being very happy. And when the night came she would welcome her husband home, and after a merry

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meal they would go out to where other young folk were, and there would be singing and dancing and great joyousness. And later on, there would be a baby in its crib, a fat and dimpled thing—just one—who would say the cutest things as she grew up. That was what she had seen in Jacksonville.

But strive as she would, she could not bring herself to follow out this program—to go to a cooking school seemed so grotesque a thing, now that she was in New York, that she all but laughed at it. Why shouldn't one? Well, just one didn't do it. And there wasn't such a thing as the apartment she dreamed. And babies—of course there must be babies, but not now. Not for years yet. They must wait. They couldn't afford it. When things were right, and they had a little car and things of that sort, then was the time. But now? Impossible! She spent days in grisly fear. . . .

She had come to New York, thinking to use it for her delight, to keep it in its place, to have it when she wanted. But the Sinister City was not created to be any girl's plaything. It was the master; it willed and individuals obeyed. And Georgia Wayne obeyed its saturnine behest completely, quickly, without knowing that she was obeying it, or even that an order had been given her.

IV

In the third month of her marriage she met Chester King.

King was a promoter, one of those organizing geniuses who deal in opportunity. It was he who

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had built a large amusement park on one of the neighboring sea beaches and made a million dollars out of it, either for himself or for his principals. One never knew exactly how much of a scheme was his, and how much his associates'. His specialty was bringing brains and money together and guiding them in team with a firm, cunning rein. He was not a theatrical manager, but theatrical managers often got him to find them an angel, and in return he would get one-sixteenth of the show. He was in the amalgamation of various hotels. He was a figure on Broadway.

He was about forty-eight years old, but he might have been thirty-five, were you to look at his carefully massaged skin and plentiful hair. He might have been fifty-five if you were worldly wise enough to read the experience in his black eyes. A big, towering man with a manner that was not bluff, but yet seemingly sincere. Power seemed to exude from him. He had what is called great charm of manner.

Part of his legal business was done by Lafe Wayne's firm, just an occasional part of it, like the drawing up of theatrical contracts, but the firm was eager to get the whole of it. It was no use asking him for it, or showing him good reason why he should do it. One firm as well as another could manage things for him. The thing was to catch him, to bind him by some sentimental tie, and to rely on the Broadway adage, "Never give a stranger what might help out a pal."

There was a sort of game one played in matters of this kind. There was little or no business talked.

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The prospective customer was asked out to a golf links for a day's playing, or put up at a club, or he was invited to a dinner party where champagne laced with brandy was the favorite beverage, or to a private supper in a hotel with some kindred souls, where chorus girls in little or no costume danced between courses. But King was not to be caught in this way. Orgiastic banquets were all right for younger, shallower men. Something new had to be devised.

"Let's try Wayne," Voorhies, the senior partner, suggested to his associates, Mulligan, Eckstein, and Varesi, "Wayne and his young Southern wife."

Voorhies was counting on the luxury of sentiment turning the deal. A young married couple always appeal to a tired man of the world. They touch hidden springs. In them he sees romance and recalls forgotten romance in his own life, and wonders what will become of them—will they become as successful and as acid as he, or will they live happily ever after? And his heartstrings are pulled a trifle, and he wants to do something for them. Lafe Wayne, the great runner, and his girl-wife Georgia, wasn't that a romantic morsel for an epicure's mouth?

"Wayne," Voorhies told Lafe, "I'm going to let you handle Chester King for us. If you can get him, there's going to be a lot in it for you. Get him to come out with you to dinner if you can—dinner with you and your wife—firm's expenses."

He brought him in to introduce him to King.

"Here's the man," old Voorhies said, "who's going to handle that moving-picture business for

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you, Mr. King. He's a new addition to our firm, but you've probably heard of him, Lafe Wayne, the runner."

"I should say I had." King grasped him warmly by the hand. "Many's the hundred-dollar bill I've won on you. I was a bit of a runner myself in the old days, before you were born, my boy."

"I'm afraid I'm not up on your movie business, Mr. King—"

"Plenty of time. Plenty of time. We must get to know each other better."

"You ought to see the last trophy he brought home," old Voorhies cackled. "The prettiest little wife that ever came from below the Mason-Dixon line. You wouldn't think so much of him when you saw her. I wish you could meet her."

"Indeed I wish I could," King said, with dignity.

"Perhaps you could be persuaded to come to dinner with us," Lafe ventured, "and by then I'd be up to your legal business, Mr. King, and we could talk matters over."

"Why, this is most kind of you." King looked him up and down and saw the trap, but he accepted.

"Georgia," Lafe shut himself into a telephone booth and called her up excitedly, "we've got our chance."

"Oh, Lafe!"

"We're to take Chester King, the promoter, out to dinner, and try to persuade him to give Voorhies, Mulligan, Eckstein and Varesi his business."

"Lafe dear!"

"You'll help me, won't you?"

"Oh, Lafe! How can you ask?"

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"And we'll swing it!"

"Leave him to me, Lafe. That's all I want. Leave him to me."

Leave him to her! Leave Chester King to Georgia Wayne! My God! Leave a mottled tiger to a pretty, white-fleeced, gamboling lamb!

CHAPTER VI

I

IF Chester King was a puzzle to New York, he was a greater puzzle to himself. Forty-eight now, ever since he was twenty he had been in love with one woman or another. There had been at least nine of them, and with all of them there had been something of the raptures of paradise and a great deal of the pangs of hell.

He had married none of them, for one reason or another—the main one being they had been frail in the courtship days, and later, when love had gone, they no longer demanded matrimony. Some of them were actresses looking for or beginning a career, and they did not want to be bound. Some of them had been bachelor women, as they are called, secretaries, interior decorators, and the like, and some of them had been married already. He would see them, meet them, talk to them, and immediately become consumed with a desire to know their innermost heart, their innermost sanctuary. A strange flood like a fever swept over him and made him all but die. He was like one the Oriental story-tellers speak of, Ganin Bin-Ayyub, the Slave of Love, or his kind, who all but die of love and desire.

He would be sleepless at night; he would weep

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at times. There were concentrated tragedies in his life, the more dreadful because none ever knew of them. One day, while a woman was undergoing an operation, he sat at the telephone, the receiver to his ear, a revolver at his right hand, and if the nurse had said she was dead he would have killed himself.

There was something pathological about his love affairs. The women he fell in love with were small, blond, plump women, all of the same type. They had a magnetic attraction for what was radical in him. They were a tuning fork ringing loudly to one deep vibrating tone in that strange thing in him that everyone possesses in a larger or a lesser degree, bare or hidden, the mystery called temperament. By fair means or foul he got his subject, except upon three terrible occasions when he all but died, as young men in poetry were supposed to die.

And then suddenly, after a spell of loving one or the other of them, he would wake up, as it were from a trance, and find he no longer loved them. At any hour of the day or night this feeling might come to him. Then he would have to get rid of them, and he did this as tactfully as possible. All of them had been mature women and had been his for only a year, so they recognized the inevitable and went, some with perhaps a mute running tear, and some with a vicious explosive scene, and some just shrugging their shoulders.

When he was free of his obsession he would wonder to himself how he had ever fallen in love at all, and he would thank God it was over and

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that he had come safely through it. He would swear to himself, "Never again!" But in a year it would be all as it was before and he would be head over heels in agony and passion for a new acquaintance. It was like a dipsomaniac breaking out on a periodical drinking bout.

He was a strange, dark soul, more a torture to himself than to the women he loved.

II

The first thing that attracted him about Georgia Wayne was her bubbling personality. She gave herself so freely to everything. She was enjoying herself tremendously at the Broadway restaurant to which Lafe had taken them. The play to which they went she listened to with lips unclosed and her whole being in her eyes. After supper at a cabaret she danced with both of them, and every fiber of her body was attuned and free moving. Never before had King seen such joy of life.

He began to notice her more carefully, noting the tint of the sherry-colored eyes, the fine brow, the sheen of her hair, and seeing more than ever Lafe saw in her, for where Lafe appreciated color and vivacity the elder experienced man appreciated line; the firm sweep of cheek and chin enthralled him, and the slender neck rising from the strong young shoulders; when she danced she was so tremendously fluid, her whole body swinging to a harmonious vibration.

He told Lafe he wanted to see him the next day, and they would talk about business then. In the

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meantime he wanted to know all about Georgia. He nodded at her father's name, remembering the insignificant flurry in Wall Street so many years before. When she spoke of her mother in Jacksonville feelingly his heart opened to her, for, like most New York characters, he had a strain of sentimentality that was enormous, and he believed, as all of his kind believed, that a mother is always a gray-haired woman praying with uplifted eyes for her wandering son.

"If I had only had a mother like that—" he said. His own mother he couldn't remember, who had died in his infancy and whose place had been taken by a competent stepmother who hated the first mother's strain in him. "If I had only had a mother like that I should have been a different man to-day."

Georgia could not understand him. Here he was youngish yet, rich, powerful, envied if not respected, with New York at his feet. How could he be a better man? But he was not married, Georgia remembered, and to her, a bride, that seemed a tragical thing, an unnatural and most unhappy state in which to be. Surely in this man's life there was some shattered and beautiful romance. Her heart in her eyes shone with sympathy toward him.

On her way home in the Subway with Lafe she thought of him all the time. He seemed so powerful, so at home in the glittering world she loved. Would Lafe ever be like that? she wondered. And something told her he never would. King had great passive power, she felt. He had the quiet and

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calm of a resistless force. By effort of will he could throw off the cares of the day and enter into the joyousness of evening as into an earned reward. But Lafe was nervous energy. For him care would be a companion in the midst of revels. And he lacked something that King had. Lafe was a rapid hitter against obstacles. King was a slow strangler of them. You hoped with all your heart that Lafe would succeed; you knew King would.

If Lafe were King's age he would not have King's polish, King's beautiful ease. She could contrast the two in her mind. At a cabaret, when the Spanish tango dancers appeared, Lafe would grow fidgety and restless. "Let's get out of this," she could imagine him fuming. "Why are we spending time and money on this fake?" But King would smile and give all attention to the stepping figures. "You and I," his smile would say, "know perfectly well that her name is not Señorita Garcia, but Mamie O'Grady. She comes not from the Argentine, but from the Bronx. But, bless her heart, she can dance as well as any of them. Let's give her a hand!"

But at King's age Lafe would be attending meetings of the Bar Association, or sessions of a legislature—serious things that had an excellent effect upon character.

How happy a wife of King's would be! Georgia's thoughts rambled on. When he came in after his business there would be always something to look forward to. She could imagine his voice: "Come on, kid. There's a ball at the Astor to-night—subscription tickets, and you and I are going to

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give the crowd a treat." And his wife, a comfortable, jolly woman, would push him out of the room while she made ready. King's wife would have nothing to do all day but rest and beautify herself against his homecoming, beyond a *matinée* or a bridge and tea party with her friends. At night there would be a box at the theater, or a joyous poker party, or a dance. Her only worry in life would be that her figure was growing heavier, and she would make attempts to reduce. But it was happiness and laughter that was putting on the weight, and how could she be else than happy and laughing with Chester King for a husband?

But when Lafe was King's age her, Georgia's, program would be cold and prim, possibly attending suffrage parties, or *matinées* at the club where minor English authors read their effusions and autographed their works—for a price—and spoke always pityingly, and sometimes tactfully, of the barrenness of American letters. She would give formal and dreadful dinner parties to people who meant briefs and votes, and a tendency toward "uplift," like a cold wind, would blow through the room.

"That dreadful man, Mr. O'Malley, who keeps the saloon—" would be the topic of the mayor's wife. There would be mentioned the town slums—"a veritable plague spot, Mrs. Wayne!" Georgia made a little *moue* of disgust at the prospect.

She caught her breath with a little conscience-stricken gasp. Why, she was thinking disloyally toward Lafe. "You little beast!" she called herself, and caught his arm quickly and squeezed it as the express roared through Sixty-sixth Street.

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"What is it, Georgia?" She had awakened him from his schemes for furthering King's business and his dreams of what the morrow would bring.

"I love you, Lafe," she told him, and herself, with great fervency. "I love you, and you're my own husband boy."

"That's all right, pet," he answered, absently.

Poor Lafe! her heart melted at the thought of him; he was all worries and bothers. She wasn't half good enough for him, she thought, and she honestly wished she had the faculty of saving money and not wasting it. Poor old boy, with the furrows in his brow, plotting and planning for both of them. When they got home she would kiss the furrows from his forehead. Poor lad!

She half sighed as she got up at Seventy-second Street. She wished he had the polish of Chester King.

III

He threw his dinner jacket aside and began untying the exaggerated black lace bow. On his face there was the grin seen on a godfather's face as he bends over the baby that recognizes him—slightly fatuous, somehow undignified.

"God love her! Bless her little heart!"

King remembered her eyes, how they shone pityingly on him when he spoke of what he might have done had he a gray-haired mother dependent on and praying for him. Such strange eyes, too, bronze colored, sherry colored, so full of life. He had always loved blond women, mainly because of their hair, that came to life, like some magic

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golden harvest, when the sun shone on it. But her eyes were always alive and had the same golden color. One saw her through her eyes, and there was champagne there.

"Bless her soft little heart!"

Her husband was a good fellow, too. He must put lots of things in his way. But she was a winner, that little girl was. God love her, she was a winner. He admired her. He felt his heart warm to her. God love her!

He was accounted a shrewd man by shrewd New York, but he cannot have been, else he would have seen whither he was heading. And he had no suspicion of it. Normally he went about, his heart solid as a rock, and then it began to liquefy—and then trouble. To-night it was a vibrant pool of affectionate admiration. So all his attacks began.

IV

After a second dinner with King, Lafe grew troublesome. The promoter had done them proud, as the phrase is. He had called for them in a touring car with his own chauffeur. He brought Georgia a bunch of orchids. At the Plaza a table had been specially decorated for them. A box at the theater. Supper and dancing at one of the little and exclusive supper clubs that were just then springing up, where favors were given away. Georgia received a little gilt spider net with a fly of black satin on the edge. A sinister golden spider was in the middle.

"How darling!" she exclaimed. All evening Lafe had been rather silent, hardly answering when King

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tried to draw him out on sporting topics—speaking of the Japanese schoolboy who had lowered the record for the hundred-yard dash to nine and two-fifths seconds, and whom King had met two winters before on a trip through the East—failing to get interested even when the topic ran on the bringing in of ringers into college athletics. He was feeling as much out of it as a field griffon might feel in a Pekingese show, and he was letting it be evident. Poor boy! At times he would try to switch the talk to business, but King would have none of it.

“That can keep till we meet in the office, can’t it, Mrs. Wayne? We are out to enjoy ourselves, aren’t we? And the sordidness of legal business is no fit hearing for a pretty woman. It’ll keep. It won’t spoil, Wayne.”

Georgia felt embarrassed that Lafe should have obtruded matters like that. He ought to have known better, she thought, feeling a little burst of resentment against him. Hadn’t she been intrusted with the job of interesting King in their fortunes? And it was a business for diplomacy. Lafe shouldn’t have butted in like that.

The business of diplomacy was a pleasant one. The orchids had brought a gasp of delight from her, and it was only when she had pinned them to her black evening frock that she noticed the care with which they had been chosen—some had the rufous clouding of her hair and some the honey color of her eyes. It was a compliment for a princess.

All the glory of herself came out that night under the glamour of pleasure and money. She became an orchid as rare as the orchids at her waist. Her

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lips were half open, as though for kissing. Her eyes shone like a rare topaz. Lafe watched her and grew terrified a little, as a man will feel fear when he finds a rare diamond in his pocket and is not certain how he came by it. King inhaled her beauty through every pore. "Bless her darling heart!" was no longer his exclamation, but: "God! what a woman! what a beauty! and how did this hick shyster come to get her?"

She leaned over the edge of her box and wept unashamedly at the theater. And a half-hour afterward her eyes were sparkling at supper as she hummed the air the cabaret performer was singing:

"Rum-tum-tum-tum-tum-ti-iddle
Was the tune he played upon his fiddle—"

Herself, to-night, was a heroine out of some old romance, she felt. Cinderella, visiting the ball, and in a little while, like Cinderella, she would go back to poverty—back to the worn boarding house, with the hissing gas and the running water in the cupboard. Magnificence such as had been hers to-night could never have been conceived by the romancer of Cinderella, and her contrast was as stark as the contrast between the tinsel palace and the home of the ugly sisters. Cinderella! yes, she was Cinderella. And yet, no. Because she had her prince already—at least her lover and her husband. Aladdin? Yes, it was Aladdin she was to-night. The poor boy who had blundered into the garden of genii, where the jewels bowed the branches of the trees. When he left the cave he returned to his mother's unimportant shop. But Aladdin had a

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lamp and magnificence was his forever. She had no lamp. She was not Aladdin.

Yet if she had only known it, she was Aladdin. She had her lamp that would bring her magnificence when she called on it. Her lamp was Chester King.

He left them at the door of their boarding house that night, getting out of the car to take his leave of them.

"Good night, Wayne. See you Monday at eleven. . . . Don't mention it. Pleasure, I assure you."

Georgia had tears in her eyes.

"Thank you," she told him, "for the loveliest night I've ever had." She remembered suddenly, and touched where the orchids nestled underneath her wrap. "And thank you—for everything!"

He held her hand and her gaze for a long moment.

"Good night, my dear," he said, swiftly, and got into his car.

Was it the tears in her own eyes, Georgia wondered, that gave her the illusion that there were tears in King's eyes, too?

V

And immediately, of course, Lafe must make himself disagreeable.

"This evening," he observed, "must have set King back a couple of hundred dollars."

"Oh, Lafe dear, not so much as that. How could it have?"

"Did you think he got those orchids for less than twenty? Perhaps thirty! The sherry and

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Burgundy at the Plaza! I saw him slip the captain a ten-spot as we came out. The box at the theater! The pirates' den of a supper place afterward. Say, he must have spent a fortune to-night. Now, why did he do it?"

"Because he likes you, honeybunch, and wants you to take good care of his business."

"Because he likes you, more likely." Lafe laughed a little bitterly.

"Oh, Lafe, how can you say such a thing?"

"Oh, I've been hearing about this bird lately, and what I've heard of him doesn't impress me any too well. He's not the sort one cares to have around one's wife or sister."

"Lafe!" She was downright shocked. It was so ungrateful of Lafe. He might have been nice about King, when King had given her the evening of her life. And besides, she didn't believe a word of it.

"We're going to walk wary with this bird in future."

Georgia turned away. She didn't want her husband to see her face. Twice to-night he had disappointed her. Once when he tried to thrust business on King at what was so obviously the wrong time and the improper place. And now, when, after accepting his hospitality, he turned and snapped at the man in his absence. She would never have believed it of Lafe, if she hadn't heard him with her own ears. Never! never! A tear, very different from the ones she had shed at the theater, and from the mist of gratitude toward King, welled up in her eye and rolled down her cheek. She cuffed it quickly away.

CHAPTER VII

I

FOR days Lafe had been grumbling at the boarding house, and in his eyes was that serious, stubborn look that always betokened action on his part. Georgia had seldom seen that look, but the few times she had she discovered a state that her wheedling, her pretty pleading, could not get around. Principle and common sense were awake in Lafe.

If they left the boarding house there were only two things they could do. To move to an apartment hotel, such as is to be found in hundreds about the Seventies—pretentious palaces for pretentious bourgeois, whose dignity was flattered by uniformed bellboys carrying buckets of ice water, by a desk clerk with a superior manner, and by a telephone in their bedroom. But these pinchbeck Biltmores Lafe could not afford.

She knew what he wanted. A bungalow in New Jersey, such as his friends and associates lived in, in the Oranges, probably; anyway, some community of newly married couples—a commutation ticket, a monthly visit to a theater in state, a cheap country club with something called a golf links, a white-collar colony of nervous paupers who played a pathetic burlesque of the life at Piping Rock and Tuxedo. Lafe would soon rise as two per cent of

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this colony did rise, and he would follow the steady stereotyped progress of the kind. New Jersey to Forest Hills, a year or so there. A migration across the Sound to Westchester County—Larchmont or Rye were the favorite points; back to Long Island—Great Neck most likely. At each of these points families dropped. They had reached their social and financial level, but Lafe would go on. There would be a house in New York, a country home, a two weeks' vacation in Florida every year. Success, in fine. Lafe would achieve all. But ah, the weary, pinching years, the petty sordidness—the waiting, the waiting, the eternal waiting.

Lafe wanted her to begin that way. He had said little to her, but she knew. The idea had been in his head for a long time now, and a man cannot live with a woman in one room without the outstanding feature in his brain seeping into hers by strange mental osmosis. Yes, that was what Lafe wanted. And soon the crisis would come.

But in the meantime there was life before her, and New York called. The tang of autumn was in the air. Outside the city were the hardening roads, the crisp air, the choky perfume of burning leaves. And the spirit of it seemed to steal into the steel-gray Manhattan afternoon. Folk were back from the country, radiating energy. The shops were decked in their best. And up and down Fifth Avenue went the brisk, beautiful, hard-faced women.

At Fifty-eighth Street Georgia got off the bus and joined the smart procession, stopping here and there to admire a window display, an evening frock, an oil painting, an array of books, a piece of Persian

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pottery. The shops broke at Fortieth Street and the bulk of the Library made a depressed white gap in the street, and as she went farther along the tide of population changed. From Fortieth Street down there were few New-Yorkers and few men. The Jersey tubes had shot into the city daylight a torrent of women who milled for an instant like cattle in a compound around Thirty-third and Thirty-fourth Streets, drove eastward down Thirty-fourth Street, and swung north into Fifth Avenue. These were shoppers, or women who had just come to New York for the afternoon. From Grand Central Terminal came the Westchester contingent of invaders and mingled with the Jerseyites down Fifth Avenue. These women were dressed in all respects like native citizens. They had the same high shoes, the narrow hobble skirt, the furs, the hat. But they lacked something in the face, the look. To all its liege men and women the Sinister City had given of its personality—its confidence, its sharpness, its pride. But on the faces of these was written patently the tale of unruly furnaces, of dilatory milkmen, of small parochial worries. They might live within an hour of New York, within forty—thirty minutes of it. But they were alien folk.

"The only city in the world!" Georgia thrilled. She was fellow of the mystery of New York. In her veins throbbed the pride that had made Paul the Apostle boast, twenty centuries before, when he spoke of a Manhattan across the sea, "I am a citizen of no mean city," and made the Roman orator claim equality with any mortal with his "Civis Romanus sum."

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She turned into Thirty-fourth Street on her way to Herald Square. For weeks now she had wanted a certain make of vanity box, and a sudden access of economy had held her from it. But it occurred to her that in the department stores downtown she might get the thing she wanted at a very reduced rate. The department stores had such bargains. At any rate, it wouldn't hurt to look at them.

"And where are you going at such a clip?"

Georgia started at the voice, and turned around, half frightened. She had heard so much of that bogy of the New York streets, the masher, and she thought she had run into the terror. But it was only Chester King.

"Oh, Mr. King, you scared me!"

"What are you doing down in this sordid section of town?"

She smiled up at him. She was strangely glad to see him. And yet unaccountably shy all at once, and it was so seldom she was ever shy.

"I'm running into temptation." She nodded toward the department stores. "And you?"

"Tell the truth, I'm in pretty serious trouble."

"Oh, I'm sorry!" Her face clouded immediately.

"It's not so bad as you might think," he reassured her. "I've had a tiring, bothersome day, and if there's one thing under the sky I want, it's a drink. But to drink alone, so the authorities say, is the beginning of perdition. You wouldn't take pity on me and come and have tea while I sip a well-earned highball?"

"You're sure you deserve that highball?"

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"I deserve a dozen," he affirmed, solemnly. "But I want just one."

"Well, I'll take pity on you," Georgia smiled merrily. "But where shall we go?"

He steered her across the street and a block down Sixth Avenue. They went through the swinging doors of the Guadeloupe. They went past a screen of palms, and a burst of music came to their ears as they entered the tea room.

"Why, it's a *thé dansant!*" She had read of them, but she had never yet been to one. She was once more in Aladdin's cave.

"You didn't know this was here, did you?"

"No, I didn't," King said. "But now that we're here, we're here."

"Oh, what luck!" Georgia crowed like a child. "To meet you at Thirty-fourth Street, and to walk right in here."

But it wasn't luck! it was skill. For King had seen her at Forty-second Street, followed her along, and then, at the right moment, had said the right thing, at the right place.

II

There was about the whole atmosphere of the tea room, from the palms that shielded the door to the shaded lamps, from the gliding dances to the muffled orchestra, an air of clandestinity that Georgia did not recognize, but just thought of as "comfy." In sort of half shadows the dancers swung past, hesitating, whirling, chasséing. Without the world went about its business with hurried

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step, with a rumble of drays, with a clatter and clang of trains. But no hint of that healthy necessity of work crept into the sanctuary of leisure and pleasure and veiled purpose. Crouched over little tables, whispering above their cocktails, couples were talking with wary or liquid eyes. And here was an atmosphere different from the riot of Broadway at night. There and then were the folk out for a bout of revelry, but here were revelry's addicts, the macabre population, the people who were not content with an evening's outing, but must have merriment all the day. Georgia did not know this, nor did the people themselves, probably. They were accustomed to think of addiction in terms of drugs or alcohol. They would have laughed had it been applied before them to theaters and dancing. But it was so. The shaded tea room with its air of luxurious secrecy was as sinister as morphine, as creative of nostalgia as alcohol.

They were a strange folk, those of the tea room, a queer, democratic masonry. Here and there were sleek-headed, thin-waisted, professional men dancers—who were to be dubbed later as lounge lizards and recognized as a terrible menace—hired by the management to dance with mature matrons, whom they would later blackmail. Here were women of the mysterious age, flowering in an Indian summer of revelry—women who had all their lives been staid, until now they decided that their precise quality had been but the locust devouring the green years. Here was a judge with a well-known woman of Broadway. Here were men in plenty with their stenographers, indulging a romance and passion

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that had flowered suddenly in the barren bunkers of their office, unknown to their wives. And most prominent of all here were men of substance in the city, men who at middle age had amassed sufficient fortunes, bachelors, figures in the life of Broadway, men of Chester King's age or more, and with them were young and pretty women, of Georgia's age and social type.

"A cocktail?" King asked as they sat down.

"No, thank you. Just tea."

"Tea and a Scotch highball," King told the waiter. He watched Georgia as her eyes went wonderingly about the room. She turned to him suddenly.

"Where do all these girls come from?"

King laughed. "Where do you come from?"

"But I'm married."

"So are they."

"But why aren't they taking care of their homes?"

"For a very good reason. They have no homes to take care of. They live in boarding houses. Their husbands rush out in the morning. They face a long and boring afternoon. So they come here."

"Oh, but—"

"But what, now?"

The orchestra broke into a one-step. Couples began to take the floor. King waited until the swing of the dance got into Georgia's veins.

"Shall we?"

She hesitated, and then confessed, "I'm just dying to."

As the dance went on she found she was enjoying it more and more. The absence of Lafe, somehow,

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removed the faint shadow of mental discomfort she felt when he was there. He disapproved of so many things, that she was never certain but that he disapproved of her dancing with other men, though he said nothing. But the possibility of it had always made her reserved, had taken part of the joy of it away from her. He wasn't here now, and she moved with free, liquid, electric steps. And then suddenly the dance was over and they were coming back to the tables.

"You think it isn't right for these young married women to be here dancing without their husbands?"

"Well, it doesn't sound so, does it."

"Look at it squarely now," King proposed. "Here are girls brought up to jollity and laughter, and are they, just because they've married a man who hasn't enough money to give them a home, to sit moping in a boarding-house bedroom all afternoon? Does it sound fair to you?"

"It doesn't—quite," Georgia agreed.

"Now tell me," he leaned forward. "Which is better for a woman, to sit all afternoon in a stuffy room, and brood, and feel discontented and disappointed and turn against her husband, or to come down here and have a jolly time, and work off surplus energy, and go home and greet her husband with a smile? Tell the truth, which?"

"To come down here, of course, but—" The orchestra began a one-step, and King looked at her smilingly. Georgia smiled, threw back her head, and laughed lightly. Both got up without a word and swung into their place in the moving circle.

"But what—" King took up the conversation.

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"It's unfair." Georgia shook her head. "A man slaving all day at an office while his wife dances. It's not right—"

King was laughing gently. He watched her with the air of a crack golfer smiling at a beginner fanning a shot.

"My dear child," he put his cigarette down. "That's bunk. Pure and simple bunk. I'm giving away the secrets of my sex, but I'm telling you the truth. Most men—nearly all men—enjoy their work as much as you enjoy dancing. And I think that's a lot."

"Do you think they do?"

"Take your husband, for instance. He goes off in the morning and dictates letters. You've been in your husband's office. You've seen the stenographers? Have you ever seen an ugly one?"

"No, of course not. Oh, but Lafe—"

"I know, I know. Lafe doesn't care about them. Neither do eighty per cent of the other men. But it certainly does," he went on, emphatically, "lighten work to dictate it to a girl who would take a prize in a beauty show. And your husband doesn't eat in Childs's or the Exchange Buffet. He lunches with clients at the India House or the Bankers' or Athletic clubs, or in an uptown hotel. And they call that work?"

"Why, that's a treat!"

"Of course it is. And in the afternoon he goes and tries a case in court, and that's only a sporting event between two lawyers. None loses but the litigants. Win, lose, or draw, the sucker pays both ends of the purse. And they call that slavery!"

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The faint twinge of conscience that had worried her when she thought of herself dancing while Lafe worked had disappeared, and she one-stepped freely with King, nestling closer to him as their dancing co-ordinated more, until they were simply one rhythm machine. The floor was very crowded now and groups had gathered at the door waiting for tables to be vacated, but none were.

"Tell me," she was trying to get the thing straight, "why aren't men and women square toward one another? Why should a husband deprive his wife of possible enjoyment? Why should he always speak of slavery and hard work—not that Lafe, of course—"

"My dear"—King was solemn—"life is a game that we have hedged around with mystery. But once you know it there is no mystery to it. The woman has always the lead. There are conventions to follow, just as in bridge. If you follow the conventions you'll get most out of the game."

"I see."

"And another thing. You're a woman and you know that all men are overgrown babies. They want sympathy and loving. Give it to them. When they say they're worn out working, don't tell them they're liars. Give them sympathy. It's easiest in the long run. Exactly as it's easiest not to tell them what a good time you have."

"But why shouldn't you tell them?"

"Because they're unreasonable. Supposing one of these young wives were to tell her husband: 'Oh, honey, I've had such a nice afternoon. That importer we met at Mulcahy's called me up and took

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me out to tea in a taxi, and we danced five waltzes and four one-steps. And had one good time. Aren't you glad? Call him up and thank him.' 'So that's what you do when I'm wearing myself to skin and bone trying to feed you, to clothe you, to give you a good time! You go out with old chicken-chasers to cabarets, you lap up cocktails, you dance the turkey-trot, hey?' And a few more attempts to calm him down, and the next thing you hear is the hat torn off the rack and the front door slammed, and friend husband is off to get a good juicy bun on, or to take out some Bronx vampire to dinner, or to lose all his money at poker with the gang."

Georgia laughed. It was an amazingly grotesque fancy, with an undercurrent of kick to it. Beneath everything, it was startlingly true.

"Life, my dear, is a game with conventions."

Suddenly the occupants of the tea room began to go. It was as though a party were going to another point. A concrete movement, and they were crowding toward the door. Georgia looked at her watch.

"Oh," she discovered, in all but panic, "I must be going. It's hours later than I thought. I must rush, or Lafe will be home before me."

They rose from the table.

"And I won't have time to get my vanity case."

"Your vanity case?"

"Yes, I was going across to Tracy's to see if I couldn't get one halfway reasonable, but I won't have time now."

Unknown to her, King looked at her for a long moment shrewdly, half coldly. The thought had occurred to him that this young woman was not

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as innocent as she looked. The habit of wariness that comes with experience of Broadway was second nature to him. He hated to be "worked," as the word is. And then he laughed, for he caught sight of her laughing eyes.

"It doesn't matter. I'll spend the money saved on Lafe."

He felt ashamed of imputing to her the thought and lack of subtlety of a burlesque show girl.

At the door of the hotel he raised his stick. The starter opened the door of a taxicab.

"Oh no!" Georgia drew back. "I'll take the Subway."

"At this hour of the evening! With every stenographer and clerk in town hanging on to straps and jostling you! No, sister. You're going home in this."

He put her in and turned to the starter.

"Put this on my bill, Pat."

"Yes, Mr. King. Yes, sir. Yes, sir, surely, Mr. King," and he instructed the chauffeur.

"The boarding house?" King asked, "or Seventy-second Street and Broadway?"

"Seventy-second Street and Broadway."

"Good-by, little pal." He held her hand. "God bless you!"

How understanding he was, she thought to herself as she rolled homeward up Fifth Avenue. How he sensed! How he knew! And life, as he put it, in such simple terms, how uncomplicated it was—a keyword, and the cipher of existence was bared to her. Surely it couldn't be as simple as that! Perhaps he was wrong. It couldn't be. No, surely, it couldn't be.

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She got home a few minutes before Lafe, and she felt a slight discomfort about kissing him and a little terror of his asking her how she had spent the afternoon. If he had asked her, she would have had to tell a lie, and it would be the first lie she had told him. It might show in her face, she feared, and she imagined a scene in which he would drag the truth from her, as a browbeating counsel broke down the nerve of witnesses, and what would happen then her heart could not vision, but that it would be very terrible was certain. He asked her no questions, however, but cleaned up quickly and changed his collar. And he complained of being very tired.

A little look of hesitation arose in Georgia's glance as she powdered her nose before the mirror. She paused. Went ahead. Paused again.

"I thought I saw your stenographer, Lafe, at Forty-second Street to-day. What was she doing so far uptown? Miss Brady, I mean."

"Miss Brady's not my stenographer. She's Eckstein's. Mine's Miss Allen."

"That blond English-looking girl? The very pretty one?"

"Yes, I suppose you would call her pretty. I don't notice it much."

Ho-hum! She smiled a little. Ran her fingers along her eyebrow, smoothing the glossy satin line.

"Where'd you have lunch to-day, honey?"

"Oh, with a client," Lafe answered. "Went up to the Yale Club and ate there."

The Yale Club! Aha!

She went up to him and put her arms around his neck, and there was a little malicious gleam in her eye.

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"Poor Lafe! Poor boy! All tired out. Been reading dusty tomes all afternoon?"

"I was in court this afternoon, and such a funny thing, Georgia," he laughed. "It was a Chinese case, and they had to kill a rooster to swear in the opposition witness. First they got a black one. Then a gray one. But nothing would do but a white one. It held up things nearly all afternoon and we were all in fits. I laughed until my sides were sore."

She felt like punching him viciously. Slavery, eh? Worn out, eh? So Chester King was right, after all!

"Come on," Lafe urged her. "Let's go down to those carrots and peas—damn them!"

All through dinner Georgia was joyous. Her eyes sparkled. Her laugh rang out its clear vibrating contralto, like a rich wine. The boarders acted up under her influence as under champagne. She was like a young girl in love, as on a happy birthday. The boarding-house mistress smiled on her as she might smile on a new dinner service—an asset to the dining room. Even the superior copy reader, who bore all the dignity of the *New York Tribune* on his narrow shoulders, smiled frigidly on her, and it was like being commended by that proper and possibly influential journal.

"I suppose you want to go out to-night," Lafe grumbled.

"No, honey, no," she told him. "My poor boy's tired and we'll stay right home. Or do anything you like. Or if you want to we'll go to the nickel movie around the corner."

"That's reasonable," Lafe assented.

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Georgia smiled. King was right. Life was a game. Woman had the lead. And all there was required to play it successfully was a knowledge of the conventions.

III

The next morning Georgia was embarrassed, terrified, delighted.

It must have been ten o'clock, an hour and a half after Lafe had left, that a telegraph messenger arrived at the house. "Package for a Mrs. Wayne."

"Package for me? Impossible!" Georgia thought there must have been a mistake.

"Mrs. Wayne?"

"It can't be for me—" Georgia began to protest.

"Sign here," the messenger ordered, shuffled off, and left her with a small package in her hand.

She opened it—luckily she was alone in the hall!—and from a pasteboard box drew out a vanity case that made her gasp with wonder and delight. A sort of gold mesh bag it was, with the cunningest little pockets for cosmetics, for a lip stick, for a rouge box, for a mirror, which was there, for a powder case. And one could keep money in it, and a handkerchief, and Subway tickets and what not. But it was dreadfully expensive, she knew. Within was a note on hotel paper.

"Little pal," it read. "I'm off to California this morning for three months. Take care of yourself and keep a little place in your heart for me.

"I felt like a brute when you went home yesterday without your errand done. The only thing I could do was to do it for you this morning. Please accept

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this as reparation and apology. Aloha oe." And it was signed "C. K."

"From Mr. King! Oh, he mustn't! I couldn't take it! It's dreadfully kind, but I can't take it." She must telephone him immediately and make him take it back. The jeweler would give him his money back.

But she couldn't telephone him. He had gone to California.

"Gone to California!" She gave an involuntary gasp of disappointment. And he had never said a word about it yesterday! And he must have known. How long did he say he would be gone for? Three months? A long time that! And they might have had such good times, her subconscious mind told her, now that she knew the game. But, "No! no! you couldn't. You couldn't really. You mustn't think so much of that," she told herself in the tone of a wavering objector.

She went up to her room and admired the vanity bag, carrying it at arm's length by her side in front of the mirror and looking over her shoulder to gauge the effect. She should wear black to get its full value, she thought. She examined it again. What a darling it was! She had always wanted one like it. But they were too expensive. And also, she couldn't keep this one.

She considered what she could do about it. Of course she could mail it to King's office, with a letter explaining nicely that she couldn't accept it. And right away she rejected that solution. A letter is such a cold thing, no matter how worded, and he might read ingratitude and a rebuff in it, and she

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didn't want him to do that. Oh, no! he mustn't think that.

Why not wait until he came home, and give it to him then, and tell him? That would be better. Of course that would be better. But then, the jeweler might not be willing to refund him the money after so long a lapse of time. And she knew down in her heart that there would be always a temptation to carry it, and inevitably, if not to-day, then to-morrow, if by a miracle not to-morrow then certainly next week, she must succumb. What woman could resist?

No. When he came back she would give him what it cost, out of what remained to her from her mother's gift. She would wheedle Lafe to-night. After all, it was her own money, if it came to that. And she had always wanted this. She wouldn't ask for shows or dinners or anything if he gave her this. She would be good. And what a pride it would be to give King the money! If they were going to be pals, they must accept the standard of pals, and pals didn't take valuable presents from one another when they couldn't return the compliment. A dinner, a dance, that was all right from a man pal to a woman, but other things, no! King would see this, and he would like her for it, she thought. The only difficulty was getting Lafe's consent to the spending of the money. She could say she had it on approval. That wasn't so much of a lie. If Lafe were only in a good humor after dinner—

But Lafe was not. Lafe was tremendously serious. The cogitations of a week past had come to boiling point and were about to bubble over.

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And naturally the first thing he laid his eyes on when he came up after dinner was the gold vanity bag, which Georgia had failed to conceal. His brow furrowed, and her heart suddenly jumped into her mouth.

"Did you buy this, Georgia?"

She didn't know what she was saying, but the words seemed to issue from her lips naturally enough.

"No, honey. No! no!" And she laughed. "How could I? It's a present from mother I got to-day. She's fallen into a little money, and she knew I always wanted one, so she got it for me. It's a very nice one. Isn't it?"

"A very expensive one, I should say." And there was no more from him about it. But he sat down suddenly and looked at her.

"Georgia," he began, "I want to talk to you—talk seriously."

"Yes, Lafe."

"You know, Georgia, when a man gets married he expects his wife to help him all she possibly can."

"Yes, Lafe."

"Because, you see, Georgia, when a man gets on he gets on for his wife as well as himself, and so she ought to help him."

"Of course, Lafe. She should help him all she can."

"You want to help me, Georgia?"

"Why, certainly I do, honey. How can you ask such a question? Haven't I helped you already? Look at Mr. King." She thought for an instant,

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in her volatile way, that he needed her help in the same fashion again.

"Well, Georgia, it resolves itself into a question of money—"

"Oh, money!" she was disappointed.

"Yes, money," he insisted. "You know how little you can do in this city without it. And to get money you've got to make it."

"Yes, Lafe." She was agog once more. Perhaps he wanted to speculate a little on a tip some client had given him. Downtown lawyers get awfully good leads, she had heard. And perhaps he wanted her to give him what remained to her of her mother's present. Of course he could have it, the dear lad. Whether he increased it or lost it, of course he could have it. And she was so glad to possess it that she could give it to him. Dear enthusiastic Lafe!

"And to keep what you make, you've got to save it."

She said nothing. She felt somehow as if he had thrown cold water over her. It was just the same old argument, begun in a different and more serious way.

"Now, Georgia, I've been thinking things over, and figuring a bit, and talking matters over with some men in the office. We're both sick of this boarding house and the carrots and peas in little dishes. What do you say if we make a break from it? Listen, honey. Randall in our office was telling me of some new bungalows just built out in East Orange, just ten minutes from the railroad, white doors and wooden wainscoting in the dining room, and fixed for hot and cold water, and every-

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thing. Electric lights all over. They're going at a bargain now—forty a month for a house the President would be glad to live in. And I figured out a way to get it furnished and all, and Georgia—”

She was sitting in the armchair near the window, her chin on her hand, her head turned from him, her eyes on the lighted street. He knew she didn't like the idea, but he was going to make her like it. The reason she didn't like it, he felt, was because she knew nothing about it. A foolish prejudice, that was all. Just give her a month out there, he told himself, mistress of her own house, and she wouldn't exchange it for the Waldorf-Astoria. But he had to win her over.

“—and Georgia, just think of us out there. You'll have your place. Your own parlor. Your piano—everything. All day long at the office I'll be working like mad”—he fancied he heard a muffled “humph” from the chair near the window, but he thought he was mistaken—“trying to make money so as we will get a larger place, and happy and proud all the time that I will be coming home to you—”

He stopped short, for she had burst into a torrent of weeping. He stood up, aghast.

“Georgia! Georgia dear? What's wrong?”

“Come home to me?” she replied, bitterly. “That's all you think of? That's all you think of now. I'm to wait all day until you come home, just as I do here. And when you come what do you want to do? Just lie around. You want to go to bed, you're tired, and the rest. That's all I mean to you!”

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She stood up from her chair and turned on him, her eyes flashing strange topaz tints through the mist of her tears, her bosom high with indignation. In her hand was her little handkerchief, clasped dramatically.

"That's what I am, just like an Eastern woman in a harem—keep in—don't let anyone see you—and in due time your lord and master will come and visit you—that's all you mean to him—the trees outside—the light—the people—they're not for you. And that's just me! Anything I've had in the way of recreation I've had to plead for and pray for and go down on my knees for. I thought I was going into romance when I married you. And I was going into a prison. A prison, I tell you! a prison!"

All the disappointment and fears in her had burst forth into a wild facile oratory. She didn't quite know what she was saying. She was just protesting against this rustication. Her husband looked at her, bewildered.

"And so that this prison be cheap, you want to set it in the country away from everywhere, where I won't see a soul I know from morning until night. Dirty snow in the winter, dirty brown grass in the summer, and the neighbor's wash flapping every Monday morning. And you go in to your pretty stenographer. You lunch at the Yale Club, and your funny Chinese cases, and then you come out and dine with pretty me, and sleep there, and go in the next morning to your pretty stenographer, your lunch at the Yale Club and your funny Chinese cases. It's fine for you, Lafe Wayne, but what about me? What about me?"

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She collapsed suddenly into a chair and began crying as though her heart would break.

"Why did I ever marry? Why didn't I stay in Jacksonville? I'll go back to Jacksonville. I'll go back to my mother."

He looked at her, aghast, and crushed not a little, for the accusations she had made against him hurt like a raw wound. He felt somehow as if some support had been plucked from underneath his feet and as if he were suspended in an alien element with no idea of what move to make next. She dabbed at her eyes in silence, broke down again, and, considering what she had just said, spoke amazingly:

"Oh, Lafe, you don't love me any more!"

She got up and came to him and put her arms about him and cried on his breast.

"Lafe, Lafe, why are you so cruel? Don't you care for me at all any more?"

"I love you, Georgia. I love you. And what you said isn't true."

"I know it isn't, honey. I just—didn't know what I was saying. But I was scared. I couldn't go there. Don't ask me, Lafe. Please don't ask me."

A great sob rose and broke in her throat.

"I'd die, Lafe. I'd just die. I'd just lie down and die. I'm not one of those big, sensible women, Lafe. I'm just—Georgia. Don't leave me alone all day, honey. Please don't."

The plea, "just Georgia," stirred up an immense flow of chivalry in him. Yes, after all she was right. She was not of the big, sensible kind. She

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was—just—Georgia, a child, agog for love and light and laughter.

“All right, pet, we won’t go.”

“If you want your own home”—her head was still against his chest and her voice was muffled—“why don’t you have it in New York here? An apartment, honey, just for our two selves.”

They went together as though one person, and sat on the couch in the shadow of the room. The gas had not been lit all this time, and now night was here, and the only light in the room came from the street through the lace curtains, and to-night they felt again the romance that had enveloped them on the St. Johns River that night she had confessed to Lafe she loved him, with a song. And in him, too, there arose the old plotting, planning instinct, and he told her of something he had kept from her—that on the first of the month his pay would be raised to seventy-five dollars a week—he had so completely succeeded in enmeshing Chester King. They could get one of those bijou apartments such as were being built now everywhere on Brooklyn Heights, on Broadway off Riverside Drive, on Central Park. Two rooms and a bath and kitchenette.

“We’ll furnish it with our money,” Georgia cried, meaning the thousand that remained to her of her mother’s gift. Such places didn’t take much furnishing. And each flat had its telephone—and to them that abomination seemed a tremendous luxury.

They two would live there alone. Lafe did the planning, and Georgia chimed in, “Yes, honey.” Those were all the sounds in the room—Lafe’s voice

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low and dreaming, and Georgia's sweet agreements and occasionally from her a dreadful sob, the aftermath of her weeping. Breakfast there, and Georgia would have lunch there, and at night they would go out for dinner, eating at some of those *pensions* they had heard vaguely of, kept by French folk, where the cooking was excellent and the prices reasonable, as only French prices are. And now and then they would have dinner at home, and Lafe would help. Picnicking in their home—"Oh, what fun, Lafe dear!"

They were closer together than they had ever been before, it seemed to them, soul and body and mind mingling in a strange psychic harmony that was like the strumming of some mysterious lute. There was no longer the timidity of the honeymoon nor the emptiness of sheer romance. They were two currents joining and moving in a definite direction, and then sleep came on them, Georgia clasping her husband's hands, her tawny head on his breast. She was happy. To-morrow they began.

But they never began. For late that night she was awakened by a pain such as it seemed no human could bear. The little quivers and stitches she had been feeling on her right side, low down, and had been making little of, had turned into searing red iron. Screaming, she was rushed to a hospital, where Ian Fraser took her appendix away, and later he and the hospital and sundry and many expenses, and a month's convalescence at Virginia Hot Springs took away her dream home with its dream furniture—the little bird in the brass cage,

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the wooden twin beds, the gleaming sideboard, the Eskimo Spitz dog, the nice colored prints of Dante and Beatrice, and the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, volume on volume of India paper, a tremendous bargain—so educational!—a dollar down and a dollar when they find out where you've moved to.

CHAPTER VIII

THE big-mouthed, big-footed, big-hearted Irish nurse came into the room, smiling under a load of chrysanthemums, great, tawny, flamboyant, martial flowers.

"See?" she raised her eyebrows and looked at Georgia, lying white and worn on her cot. "Some one's kind to you."

A great gasp of pleasure came from Georgia, and if she had been able to she would have sat up and clapped her hands in delight—for the white anti-septic room was horribly bare, and tremendously lonely, and twice that day she had cried a little with the terrible nostalgia of sick folk. It was dreadfully lonely for her, for Lafe could only be with her for an hour in the evenings, his work keeping him away all day. None of the people in the boarding house had come to see her—they, too, had their work—and it was pathetic to think how alone she was in New York. And now this forest of flowers had come to brighten up the day and to make her less lonely, for flowers have personality and beauty. They are like kind and pretty and well-bred children in a room. One can imagine them deeply sympathetic. . . .

But whom did they come from? Not Lafe. Lafe, dear lad, had many virtues, but the pretty, appealing ones were not his. He would worry

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himself ill about her, and she knew he was frantic with agony while she was in danger. But it would never occur to him to buy her a bunch of pansies. He was too young. Women know by intuition, but men learn from experience only. If he had been ten years older he would have known that a bottle of eau de Cologne would have warmed her heart more to him than a gigantic mental effort made to provide her with a castle and moat. Poor Lafe, he had his virtues, but they were not of the kind that preened themselves in the sun. . . . But who could have sent them?

"What name is there on them, Miss Reilly?"

"Isn't that queer, now, but there's no name at all. Ah, sure it's from that young husband of yours they are!"

"I don't think so." Georgia was certain they weren't. "They're from Fleischmann's, aren't they? Miss Reilly dear, would you do me a little favor?" None ever refused to do her a favor she asked for as though she were conferring it, so pretty was her manner. "Would you telephone the florist and find who sent them? I'm so eager to know."

"Indeed and I will."

If Chester King were in New York, Georgia thought, he might have, would have, done it. But King was in California now. No, they couldn't be from him.

But they were. Miss Reilly returned with a telegram in her hand.

"Fleischmann's say they were ordered by wire from the Pacific coast; and here's a telegram for you, Mrs. Wayne, that came this morning and

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hadn't been delivered yet. It was taken by mistake to Mrs. Warner, her that's just after dying, poor soul, with her first baby."

"Oh, I'm so sorry to hear that!" and Georgia was. The thought of anyone dying was a tremendous tragedy to her. She opened the wire.

Shocked to hear of your illness. Wire me at once how you are. Will be in agony until I know. God bless and keep you, my dear. KING.

She had unconsciously been thinking of him so much that the coming of the wire did not surprise her as much as it should, although it did act on her like a faint galvanic current. How had he known? And then she remembered that his legal work had been held up by Lafe's frenzy and nervousness. King would naturally have kicked and they had explained to him by wire. "Wire me at once"—the order thrilled her. "In agony until I know"—that scared her a little. "God bless and keep you"—her heart melted to that. And that forest of flowers. He had slipped in closer to her now.

But the thought of his being in agony scared her. What should she do? She couldn't ask Lafe. Were she to show him that wire he would suspect she had encouraged King and ask distressing questions and have ugly suspicions, and she hadn't encouraged him at all. But what was she to do? She was scared.

But the great chrysanthemums nodded their kindly masculine heads toward her, to reassure her, as it were. After all, what was she afraid of? Wouldn't a man be in agony over a pal in danger, just as

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much as over a woman he loved? What did she know about men's feelings and what occasioned them? She had only known shallow flirtations and the passionate love of one boy. What did she know of the feelings of tired, steely men of the world? Nothing. Then don't be foolish. Never cross bridges until you come to them, she had heard her mother say. And above all don't get Lafe in a state over things. What was that other proverb—the German one? *Was man nicht weiss. . . .*

But the flowers? How should she explain those to him? The telegram on the bed gave her inspiration. If the dead woman had received her telegram, why shouldn't she receive the dead woman's flowers? She would tell Lafe, she decided, that the flowers had been sent to her by mistake, and when the mistake was discovered it was too late, so they had let the flowers be. She hated to tell a lie, but wasn't it better than getting Lafe into a state? Losing his sleep, maybe. Worrying at the office, certainly. Quarreling with King, most probably, and losing his chance of advancement. That would be terrible; that's the one thing which mustn't occur. For Lafe's own sake she would tell him the lie. The end, went a third proverb, justifies the means. That was a deep one. There was a lot to that when you came to think of it. And how true!

The twilight had set in and over Central Park a vast gray cloak had arisen. It was not the twilight of a summer, nor the usual crisp steel twilight of autumn, but a dull gray *Entre chien et loup* the French phrase it—"between dog and wolf."

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A heavy, melancholy, semiopacity when dead folk walk rather than at burgeoning midnight. And in this and before lamps were lit Georgia fell into a somnolence when vague figments of this thing and that scurried across her brain. First there was a great shining palace such as she thought she remembered from a child's edition of the *Pilgrim's Progress*. Domes, cupolas, spires, and roofs that threw off rays of light like radium. It was placed on a hilltop, and it seemed to her that this palace was the objective of every traveler in life. It meant success, in no matter what terms. And to get there there seemed to be two roads. One branched to the left, one to the right. She thought one would be a broad primrose path and the other a path through a thicket. But she laughed, so grotesque are dreams, for the one to the right started just like a road through a suburb of Jersey, with little bungalows and fragile garages and the atrocity of suburban railroad stations. And the other went down a broad lane where the theater lights were, and the taxis scurried like rabbits, and there was the sound of whining ukuleles from the cabarets, and the crash of Latin-American music, and through the open windows folk could be seen dancing. But on the road to the right there was silence, as of effort.

And it seemed to her that she was a disembodied spirit, standing at the junction of these two roads headed toward the shining palace. The road to the right she could see going through the distance straight to its objective. But the left road through the pleasant place of Broadway ended suddenly in plain sight.

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Then out of the gray twilight where the dead walk came nudges, voices. "Take the road to the right, Georgia. Georgia, take the road to the right." She heard them as she hesitated, watching the left road end in a cul-de-sac. "But it can't end there," she said. "I know it can't end there." And it occurred to her that from where it vanished there would be a tunnel, or something, like a pleasant rathskeller, going the rest of the way. Yes, that must be it. However it was, there would be a way. She advanced a step down it. But the voices called to her, and dim, immaterial hands plucked piteously at her sleeve.

"Oh, Georgia, don't go down that road. Take the road to the right."

"But, souls dear, there is a way. You mustn't be ridiculous. Of course there is a way."

She went down it with eager feet, and behind her she could hear them wailing.

"Georgia has gone down the road to the left," they cried, piteously. "Dear Georgia has gone the wrong way. . . ."

She blinked. The little probationer nurse was standing above her. She had brought in her dinner and snapped up the lights.

"Dreaming, Mrs. Wayne?"

"I'm afraid I was getting morbid."

"Oh, you mustn't get morbid, Mrs. Wayne."

CHAPTER IX

TO Georgia Wayne the home of Ian and Annis Fraser was like a new country. It was strange to her and she was not quite certain she liked it, but she knew enough to admire it. Her idea of the perfect home had always been a fantasy of white and gold—a drawing-room that glittered and a dining room that shone, such as one sees in smart comedies of the New York stage.

But the dignified and beautiful rooms in the Fraser home, long, high-ceilinged, restrained, struck a note she had never seen before. The great fireplace with its shining brass accouterments, its crackling logs—it seemed so strange in a city of gilded radiators. The old Friesian clock on the wall, with its knight riding the pendulum, why should one have a clock like that nowadays? She thought of those ornate and yet chastely designed timepieces in the Fifth Avenue place—what was its name? Everything was strange to her—the somber refectory table, the block of marble with the mallet for striking it. A strange house in a strange land.

And yet she recognized an unusual atmosphere here. People lived in this house. In the house she dreamed of one day possessing there would be no mark but the mark possibly of money and smartness, the latest music on the piano, the newest sort of

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cover for the telephone, lights that were let into tables, and inscrutable Japanese serving such dishes as were on the menus of every resort hotel of first class in America. And women would speak of her admiringly:

"She has a good husband and a lovely home—a lovely home."

Annis Fraser came into the room, a tall, slim figure in green and gold, standing out against the background of the house like a figure against a Zuloaga background, and then like a flash it occurred to her that where she saw only detail the folk of this house saw a great whole.

She felt shy and embarrassed before Annis Fraser—the embarrassed adoration of a very young girl. She was surprised to see how at ease Lafe was here. He was answering her questions as easily as though he were talking to an associate at his office.

"You're delighted to have her back again, aren't you?" Annis said. Georgia had just returned from her trip to Hot Springs.

"You just bet your life I am, Mrs. Fraser," Lafe replied. Fraser, jovial, red-headed, came up and crushed her small hand in his sinewy grasp.

"You're not missing your appendix much, are you?"

"No. I can't imagine missing it a lot."

"Well, some folk do. Do you remember," he turned to his wife, "that English millionaire, the coffee man, I operated on? He's got his appendix in a Waterford cut-glass jar, full of alcohol, on a whatnot—in his parlor, I suppose he calls it. He

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shows it to visitors just like a child 'll show a tooth. Yes, he's serious."

"Oh, Ian," Annis objected, for everyone was laughing, "leave the poor man alone."

"The real joke is," Fraser grinned, "is the appendix he has his?"

"Ian! You don't mean—" Even Annis couldn't help laughing.

"He's dreadful!" Annis complained to Lafe and her. "For all his genius, he's like a bad child at times. Now come along. I want you to meet people. This is Alick Redmond." Georgia saw a tall young man with black curly hair and blue eyes, and recognized the name as that of the leader of the younger Neo-Celtic poets. "Bishop Cauldry." An ascetic-looking ecclesiast with a pleasant smile. "Miss Banning." She knew Miss Banning by reputation and sight, Charles Dillon's leading woman. "Miss Hopkins." A dark, slight, not pretty but somehow attractive girl who was smoking a cigarette and watching Redmond closely. "Sir Colin Munro." A weather-beaten man of fifty whom one instinctively associated with horses, with immense shoulders and neck and the slightest of legs. He shook Georgia's hand warmly, and smiled on her and Lafe. "And this is Chris Mulcahy. Everyone in New York knows Chris Mulcahy."

"Don't let her josh you, Mrs. Wayne."

"Mr. Mulcahy is deputy police commissioner. I thought everyone knew him."

"Keep away from the police as long as you can, Mrs. Wayne. The less you know of them the better." The pleasantness of the young commissioner took

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away from her a little of the awe before Redmond, the poet, and the actress, Miss Banning, and the titled Scotsman. Lafe had been dragged away by the man of the house and was now talking to the bishop.

Her awe completely left her at dinner. The poet wasn't talking poetry, but sparring with the bishop over the moral qualities of musical comedy, to the evident disgust of the dark-haired girl, who wanted him to talk about the Tautha De Danaann and other stock phrases of the Celtic Twilight. Miss Banning was complaining bitterly to Annis of the star she worked with.

"My God, dearie, I can't stand that man much longer! Friday night in the show he was awful. He expects you not to move, to stand like a statue while he speaks. Do you know what he said to me under his breath in the third act? He said, 'If you move your hands again while I'm speaking, you big fat cow, I'll take a chance and bust you one right here on the stage.' The man's crazy as a coot."

"He's overworked, my dear. A hundred and seventy performances!"

"Well, what about me? Ain't I overworked, too? And I'm not going to stand for any shrimp like Charles Dillon calling me a big fat cow." And her pleasant, ample frame quivered with indignation. "Indeed no!"

"Miss Banning," Mulcahy told her, "you can get back at him. When he starts working for the clinch in the third act—you know that stuff: 'If you were ten thousand miles away from me I should walk barefoot to kiss the hem of your garment'—you just whisper to him: 'Phew, you poor ham, keep

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your hands off of me. You smell of rotten eggs and bad tomatoes.' And just watch his speech go to pieces. And the next morning everyone will say: 'You know, Charlie's not as good as he used to be. He's slipping. Old age.' You do as I say and you'll crab him."

Up the table she could hear Fraser arguing with the Scots baronet.

"Sir Colin, an Airedale is a grocer's dog."

'A guid, sensible tyke, though.'

"You don't see what I'm getting at. Every clerk who has saved fifteen dollars and wants to be thought a sport buys an Airedale. It's a man's dog, they say. To me the possession of an Airedale is as indubitably a sign of middle-class origin as boots with cloth uppers, as that game they play in the suburbs—poorhouse golf—what is it? Croquet. No. For a terrier, give me a Sealyham or a Scotty—"

The poet was up in arms against the bishop, defending his own hobby.

"But doesn't Your Grace see that if you condemn magic you condemn High Church and Roman Catholic ritual—the evocation of spiritual presence by lights, incense, and rhythmical formulæ—"

Mulcahy by her side was speaking to Annis, and what he said made Georgia prick her ears up. He was speaking of the New York she loved.

"Annis, I'll bet you a hundred dollars I can go into any *thé dansant* in New York where professional dancers are engaged and put my fingers on three men who have prison records, and pretty rotten records at that, records as procurers or protectors of women. That's what your *thé dansant* is."

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"Mr. Mulcahy, you must be wrong."

"Mrs. Wayne, I'm not wrong. I know. And I know what's going to happen, too, after this—" he was referring to the public murder of a noted gambler by four gunmen exalted by cocaine. "They're going to clean up the underworld. That means that the German Village and the Poodle Dog and Marshall's and Baron Wilkins's, and a host of others are to be wiped out and their habitués scattered through the Guadeloupe and the MacErin and Curry's Grecian Gardens, and on Fifth Avenue, too. Take this turkey-trot dance, one of the 'honky-tonk' dances, as they're called. The best exponents of that are the men of the underworld. They're the ones who are going to get the jobs as teachers. All underworld stuff."

"But if it's that it'll be recognized right away."

"Will it?" the deputy commissioner laughed. "Would you recognize 'Casey Jones' as an underworld song?"

"Why, that's a song about an engineer!"

"It's been cleaned up for vaudeville, as the phrase is. But it's a famous hop song, or opium-smoker's song. Even the engineer points that out. The engineer in a hop joint is the man who cooks the pill. He bends over a peanut-oil lamp in, usually, a white pajama jacket. Casey Jones was a real person, a famous addict. His name, or moniker, was Kansas City Jones. Listen.

"K. C. lay down and he ordered up a card,
And when he got it he said, 'S all right, pard?
Just at the moment I happen to be broke,
For I gave a blind man my last century note.'

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The Chink stood back and he looked very wise,
Funny little glint came into his eyes.

He said: 'All right, bo, I heard that before.
Kick in or I'll crown you with the cuspidor.'

K. C. Jones went into a hop joint!

K. C. Jones, that wise-cracking gink!

K. C. Jones is at a cold-meat party!

Got an invitation from a wall-eyed Chink!

"A 'cold-meat party' is argot for the graveyard.
So you see. It won't be long until 'Franky and
Johnny' is cleaned up for vaudeville—"

"What is 'Franky and Johnny,' Mr. Mulcahy?"
Georgia asked.

Mulcahy was about to refuse when he remembered
the bishop at the table.

"It'll be something to sing it under the auspices
of the Church," he grinned, and then began crooning:

"Franky and Johnny were sweethearts.

O my God! how they did love!

Love that was pure and was simple

And high as the heavens above.

He was her man,

But he was doing her wrong.

"Franky, you see, was a good girl,

As 'most everyone knows.

Used to spend nearly one hundred dollars

On Johnny's new suits of clothes.

He was her man,

But he was doing her wrong.

"Franky went down to the ginmill

To grab off a big glass of beer—"

Annis leaned forward and tapped him on the arm.

"That will be all, Chris. Thank you!"

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"But, Annis, it's really very touching. Johnny gets shot—"

"Thank you, Chris. That will be all." He turned, grinning, to Georgia, and became serious. "So you see, Mrs. Wayne, I'll bet you a hundred dollars that in a couple of years they'll be doing the Chicago 'shoot the shimmy' in the ballrooms of New York, and the tunes they'll be dancing it to will be negroid songs—adaptations of them—like 'Ashes to Ashes' and 'Leave the Cocaine Be.' So you see. Once a woman has got the honky-tonk into her blood, she's a goner. I don't care if she's—if she's the daughter of a bishop. It may take ten, fifteen, twenty years, but as sure as God made little apples she'll end in the gutter. It's the most sinister thing in the world. It saps every moral fiber. And the beginning is the surreptitious *thé dansant*."

"Mr. Mulcahy!" Georgia was amazed nearly to laughter.

"She may start going with a friend, but sooner or later she'll meet a man of the underworld. She can't help it. My Lord! don't you think these men have brains? And their job is to meet women, their business is to understand them, their science is to betray them. And then blackmail. And then suicide or— You may think I'm joking. Annis, can't you see it?"

"Yes, I can see it, Chris."

"So you see."

The more Georgia thought of this the more she felt it was untrue. How ridiculous! Just like those poison-needle stories. At *thés dansants* such as she was at with King! Ah, pooh!

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They were rising from the table. She could hear Miss Hopkins speaking to Redmond.

"Mr. Redmond, won't you please read us your poems and explain them to us."

"Across my dead body!" she heard Ian Fraser break in, passionately. "Do you hear? Across my dead body he reads them."

How immensely jolly everything was! How pleasant a dinner! As pleasant, in its way, as the one with Chester King. And the thought came to her, How would Chester King be there? She couldn't imagine him in this setting. No, he wouldn't fit. No, she thought, a little ashamedly, he wouldn't shine here. It wasn't just—the place—for Chester King.

CHAPTER X

I

THE guests were gone, and Ian had rushed down to Saint Peter's for a look at a patient he was worrying about, and Annis was left alone in the dim drawing-room by the crackling fire. The script of the play she had been reading—that masterpiece of Echegaray's, "El Gran Galeoto," in which she was to play the part of Teodora—had fallen into her lap. The red of the logs was turning to saffron, and as she looked into the heart of the fire a gentle hypnosis fell on her. The friendly shadows of the long room and the comfortable ticking of the Friesian clock pushed out of her mind the welter of mimic passion the great Spaniard wrote, and the forms of Don Severo and Don Julian, of Mercedes, and of Ernest dissolved into the air out of which they had been conjured, and she was not Teodora, but Ian Fraser's wife, and the folk in her mind were the folk who had been around her table that evening.

Not Mary Banning, nor Sir Colin, nor the bishop, nor Chris Mulcahy, nor Alick Redmond were in the foreground, but Sheila Hopkins and little Georgia Wayne. Sheila she knew would be married soon—that the writing girl had told her in a half-secrecy—and before her would be the problem that confronted Annis and little Georgia Wayne.

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She and Ian had been, were, so much to each other that it had never occurred to her that there was such a thing as matrimony as a problem or a science. Their state had been like a perfectly natural body which has neither pain nor discomfort to remind it of possible decay. There were no problems in their life. But back of it all there was a problem somewhere.

She had been watching little Georgia to-night, and young Lafe talking to her husband and Redmond so enthusiastically, and suddenly there had flashed into her mind the thought: What are they going to do with their life? They have it now, what are they going to do with it? People became a success, but how? And what had a wife to do with it, and what was marriage for, anyhow? On the face of it a question like that was ridiculous. Everything was so patent. Children! Ah yes, but one had children whether or not—that was natural as sunshine or running water—unless one belonged to that terrible and sinister sisterhood who, matrons, turned their backs to maternity. They couldn't afford to have a baby, they pleaded—times were so hard. Voluntarily barren, they exchanged pride of womanhood for a cheap and pretentious automobile, an apartment in the neighborhood where paupers of the higher social sort reside or some lagnappe such as a grocer might fancy. Later on, they relented, perhaps, now that John was on his feet, and threw one sickly whelp, and accounted that unto themselves for righteousness.

But there was no virtue to having babies, other than a physical pride such as an athlete might have

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in the muscles of his neck and shoulders. And as to raising them, the animals were as good mothers as humans. Marriage itself, from this viewpoint, was only an economic and social safeguard. There was more. And yet what was it?

Saint Paul saw in it a remedy against fornication. But then, of course, Paul would.

But love! any woman would have argued. Aren't you forgetting something, Annis? But no, she was not forgetting that. That was a beautiful and sacred and mystical thing. But in itself, what was it? Where exactly was the value in romance, in tender multicolored thoughts that were like the wind blowing through apple blossoms? Where was the intrinsic value in passion, that strong, natural thing like the crash of lightning, like a great gale? "And so they were married," went the tale that is told to little virgins, "and lived happily ever after." But how? And to what height did they live? And what was the end of their living?

She had been a year and more married now, and though she had lost the strange psychic fears that used once torment her, she had never lost the clairvoyant inspiration that would come to her at times, making her see characters, friends, motives, actions, and reactions with that clarity which is genius. And the mood that would come on her occasionally in a sunlit garden of trees, or at twilight by the sedge at the sea, came on her now by the crackling logs. The friendly shadows of the room induced it, and the ticking of the old Friesian clock marked its rhythm. Somewhere in the solar universe was a Great Hand and a Great Brain and a Great Heart.

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He was neither the smiling wise Lord Buddha, nor Christ Jesus, the Jewish poet, nor impatient Jahveh, nor Allah of the Moslem. He was not the gods of the Gaels even, the dim dreaming gods, nor the thaumaturgic trinity whom the Pope's men worshiped with bell and candle, with incense, with formulæ of magic, black and white. All these might be divinities, in their way, but they were not the master. He was the God of the workers, the God of artists, the God of the master masons. . . .

He was at some great design, she felt awfully, planning, working, accomplishing, now making some trivial mistake, now rectifying it, choosing and rejecting again, moving a stone of his starry edifice now hither, now yon—all toward some tremendous end whose sight was hidden from mortal eyes by its blinding glory.

And on us, the journeymen of the world, Annis thought, He is depending.

The plumb and the level, the square and compass, of our work is matrimony. By means of it humanity was to develop, was to feel, to understand, to accomplish, and on that accomplishment rested the furthering of the immense design for which men were created and lived and died. But this matrimony was not alone the procreation of children, nor the glamour of romance, nor the strong magic of passion, nor the material things of a house. All these things entered into it, but something cohered them, made them a mystical one. There was a formula missing, and that formula she wanted to get. There came into her mind the parable of the alchemists. By a certain formula incongruous

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elements were alembicized into the Philosopher's Stone, and this stone when it touched a base metal turned the base metal into shining gold. . . .

So rapt had she been in her wandering vision that she had not heard her husband come into the room, nor did she know of his presence until, coming behind her, he laid his hands on her shoulders and kissed her on the casque of glimmering hair.

"Studying up Teodora?" He saw the script in her lap.

"No, Ian," she told him, "just thinking about life."

He reached into the old Greek box for a cigarette.

"Life," he said, a bit fretfully, "is one damned operation after another."

He crossed the room to light his cigarette, and as he bent over a lamp the beam illumined his face and showed it heavy and fagged and a trifle haggard.

"You're tired, man Ian," Annis discovered, with a little sense of shock.

II

The fifteen months of their marriage had been a party—a holiday of indulging tastes.

Fifteen months before she had been living in a hotel suite, two big rooms. There had been a piano, of course, and books and flowers, bibelots of quaint design and romantic history, but, after all, it had only been two rooms in a hotel. It resembled home just as much as a tent resembled a buttressed house.

And then Ian had had his bachelor apartment on

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Fifty-ninth Street, a bare, commodious place, where he shared a Filipino manservant with four other occupants. An uncomfortable sort of place it must have been for him with its litter of surgical treatises, its golf clubs in a corner here; its row of boots in a corner somewhere else, anywhere but where they should be; its prints, the reliques of some former occupant, dingy on the wall. A dull sepia kind of home, casual as a traveler's camp.

She would move about the drawing-room, arranging flowers for the day, her long white hands quick and deft as a juggler's, thrusting here, parting there, moving leaves and foliage. She would stand back and look at her work, and, dissatisfied, murmur, "No! that won't do," or, moving to the next table or stand, begin on another vase. Long before breakfast Florine had arranged them, but, despite her pleasant smile and pretty manner, Florine had not a hand for flowers. So Annis told herself as she went around the long, high-ceilinged room. The truth was that Annis was enamored of her home, and it was unfailing delight to her to wander about it—to lean on the old English mantel of the fireplace, to watch the knight cantering gallantly on the pendulum of the clock, to catch the crystallized sunshine of the Sorolla picture, to fondle the old desk at which Sheridan had written "The School for Scandal"—the gift to her of Sir Colin Munro, Ian's friend. It was her home, hers and Ian's. And more wonderful than she had ever dreamed.

Last night she had been surprised and shocked not a little at the haggardness showing in her husband's face. And this morning, as she went

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about the room, everything in it had a friendly, serious message for her. The fire crackled forcibly and the clock seemed to emphasize its ticks. And for the first time it occurred to her the amount of money they had laid out, and were spending now. All her own savings had gone, and all of Ian's, and though Ian was making a tremendous amount of money this year, yet they were living up to every cent of it. It seemed impossible that they could, yet the impossible was true.

Dear Ian! She felt her heart go out to him in warm throbbing waves. How good he was to her! and how little money mattered where she was concerned! The luxuries he piled on her were not jewels or glittering life, but they were fine, solid things and tremendously expensive. Their new car, that slim, powerful vehicle like a leashed deer-hound that had eaten up the best part of ten thousand dollars, and for all that MacKinstry, the canny Ayrshire chauffeur, could nurse it, it swallowed gasoline in a way that must have made the oil people look forward to a bright summer. And there were the horses!

She had regretted that in her girlhood she had never learned to ride, and it had always seemed to her a great lack in a lady. She had said to Ian that she wanted to take it up, and she had done so well at it that on her birthday he gave her, as a surprise, a three-quarter-bred hackney with a trot that was a luxury and the easiest canter in the world. And thereupon the idea came to her that he, too, should have a mount of his own—he rode so well it was a pity, she felt, that he should be hiring

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horses for himself. With the help of the owners of a big riding ring she bought for him that big Irish hunter of his, the Prince of Chang, a powerful brute that could jump its own height without turning an eyelash, and that moved with the ease and strength of a great locomotive. All she had left in the bank was not sufficient to purchase him, so, unbeknownst to Ian, she sold one of her rings—and the sacrifice was sweet to her. Her husband's face was a puzzle when the groom rode up to the door with the hack and the Prince.

"This is a great buy for you, Doctor Fraser. Begor, sir, you'll know you're on something now."

"Buy?" Ian was puzzled. He looked at the splendid animal for an instant in admiration. "I can't buy a horse like that. I wish to God I could."

"She's Your Honor's now," the Irish groom said.

Suddenly he noticed Annis blushing and he understood. He quelled the protests rising to his lips and caught her and kissed her there on the stoop.

"Oh, sure, more power to Your Honor's elbow!" the groom applauded.

"Eh?"

"Nothing at all. Not the least in the world!" Annis always laughed at the memory of the old groom's embarrassment.

And great joy they had had of the two mounts. But—to keep them at Borden's cost one hundred and twenty dollars a month, and that was a great deal of money, now that she came to think of it.

This and that and the other thing, a bill here, a purchase there, an expense another place. And Ian gathering in the money with deft healing fingers,

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and she and he both letting it slip with open hands. Suddenly she discovered he had to work as hard as he was doing to keep them at the level of living they had attained. And he was tiring. Last night his face was haggard and there were little shadows about his eyes.

And that was the message of the crackling logs, and the solemn ticking of the ancient clock, and the kindly corners of the room with their photographs and flowers. "Take care! Annis! Take care!" they seemed to say. "Take care of your man. Nothing you have is as important as your man. None of us. Nothing. Nothing in the world. . . ."

III

As she sat and thought of these things it occurred to her that an indefinable change was taking place in him. She thought she had known him, inside and out, body and soul and mind, when they were married. But recently, now that she came to remember it, he had seemed more complex than she had thought. Possibly it was the strain of the work.

He was not as interested now, it seemed, as he had been, in sport and sporting things. His big hunter he was not as keen on exercising as before. Six months ago at Borden's he used to seize every opportunity possible of putting him over the sticks, and for Annis there had been a fearful thrill in watching. He would take a turn about the floor on the Prince, now trotting, now holding him to a walk, his fingers guiding the delicate mouth like a player on the strings of a violin. They would put

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the bar up to three and a half, four feet, four feet six. Annis loved to see the canter, the speed into the wings, the powerful brute going over the sticks like a swallow skimming over water.

Then the big moment came when Annis had difficulty not to turn her head away.

"Put it up to six!"

The reins were loosed, the crop came down on the Prince's flanks with a crack, and the hunter shot forward like a runaway engine. The hoofs thundered through the bark. Through a haze of trepidation she would see Ian's hands rest on the horse's neck, his heels go back, his body forward. And then miraculously they were both over and the Prince of Chang was walking daintily as a cat.

But he seemed to have lost his joy in handling the great animal. It must be stress of work.

She was surprised much more to see that golf had little power over him now. A few months past and on every available afternoon he was out, at Greenwich, at Ardsley, at Baltusrol, and she would go with him not infrequently, marveling how in a year's time he had taught her to play a game that none but the front-rank women could beat. Autumn was drawing into the crispness of winter now, and it used to be his favorite season for playing, but he didn't seem to care to go out, on the afternoons he could spare. Only last week there had been a telephone call she had heard him answer:

"I'd like to, Bobbie, but I can't to-day. Tell Francis I'm very sorry. . . .

"No. I haven't this Sunday free. . . . No! I can't. I . . . I . . . I've got an operation."

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"Why don't you go, Ian?" Annis had tried to persuade him. "You can get out there in less than an hour. And you know you want to play with Francis. You said all along he would beat Ray and Vardon."

"Och, Annis—I'm too tired."

"But Sunday, Ian? You've no operation on Sunday."

"You never know what may turn up," he defended himself, weakly. "At any rate, it's a fearful bother going in trains and carrying golf clubs. It's too far for the car."

She was immensely surprised to have heard him tell even a half-lie.

There was one gift of his that saved him from consequences of his tiredness. That was what she thought was his extraordinary ability for relaxation. At times he would come in tired, restless, his nervous system frayed. She couldn't suggest a drink, for he never did drink—he believed a surgeon should never touch alcohol, and besides it was impossible to have the faintest odor of liquor about a medical man and to retain the confidence of patients. Nevertheless, frayed and tired as he was, he could reduce himself to absolute relaxation in the few moments he left her to change his clothes or a collar, or wash his hands. Then he would come back, the creases of his faces smoothed out, easy, comfortable, quiet.

There was one thing about him that disquieted her, and that was his more than occasional outbursts of speech. Before he had been unusually sparing of words, except on the subject of sport or

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the excellence of Scots literature, and then his remarks used to come with harsh abruptness, with the characteristic lacunæ of one who thought much and said little. But now his conversation flowed with ease.

And his uncanny understanding. He might pick up the paper and, beginning on the account of some murder, bring forward motives, and mental reactions of a miraculous shrewdness, until one felt one was living in a strange and cruel world—a topsy-turvy place where one punished folk for having crooked brains. It was just as reasonable as imprisoning or executing a man for being a hunchback. It was an exercise in that dreadful half-truth that to know all is to pardon all, and Annis would grow sorrowful under his pale, glittering logic until she had attained the state of mind of the morbid philosophers—that all is vast emptiness and affliction of the spirit.

Or, discussing some new discovery of science, his thinking would take a quick swish like the turn of a polo pony, and he would be regretting the defamation of the alchemists.

“When you remember, Annis, that Roger Bacon, who was imprisoned for magical practices, discovered gunpowder, that some unknown practitioner of the black arts drew attention first to ammonia by finding it released when he fed the horn of deer to his furnace, what must not Paracelsus have known, and Nicholas Flamel and his wife Pernella, and Raymond Lully, and Michael Nostradamus—”

And, switching again, he would talk of magical practices as they are to-day, and talk of the worship of the Unknown God as it goes on now even in the

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heart of New York. He told her of Eliphas Lévy and his followers, and of the macabre clan whose motto is "Do what thou wilt—that is the law." He would speak of there surrection here and there of the Brethren of the Rosy Cross. He told her of the Black Mass that is said in New York and London and Paris at certain seasons, an orgy of blasphemy and horrible rites. He mentioned the infamy of the Red Curate. . . . And all these things he explained. He pointed out queer culs-de-sac of the mind, strange emotions, perverted natural qualities; queer no man's lands of thought he explored in her presence. It was as though some extraordinary and obsolete channel of his mind were functioning, recalling things that were best forgotten, examining matters that were best left alone, recalling unhappy buried things, elucidating mysteries that were not merely mysterious, but very terrible.

It was wonderful to hear, Annis knew, and it was marvelous to watch his flashes of genius, his absolute inspiration, but she was uncomfortable, though she would not confess it. It was very foolish of her, very foolish indeed, but she imagined, was all but certain, that as he lay there relaxed, talking fluently and wonderfully, the room was filled with, and there hovered all about him, the sinister folk of the air. . . .

IV

He was not expected home to tea, but for dinner he would come in, and it was now half past five. The dusky winter twilight was being driven over the

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river by the lamps of the Drive. A new frock had come from Hickson's for her, a symphony in green and blue, like a cornflower on its stem, and she couldn't resist trying it on. She had gone to her bedroom, with Florine, curious and smiling, trailing behind, and she was hardly in the room before she heard her husband's nervous step on the stairs.

"Master's come home early," said Florine.

Annis waited for an instant to hear his knock on the door, but he passed quickly to his own study, and the door slammed behind him. He would be in to her in an instant, however.

"Quick, Florine. Help me," and she slipped into the shimmering gown.

"Madame!" The little maid exhaled admiration.

"He's not coming in," Annis was puzzled. "I can't wait."

So full she was of her innocent interest that she left the room quickly and swept down the corridor to Ian's study. Unthinkingly she opened the door.

A little spirit lamp was burning on his desk and he was bending over it. As the door opened he turned quickly to see who it was, and she glimpsed the little spoon in his left hand and the syringe in his right. In a flash she understood.

As he saw her, something like a flicker of fear showed in his eyes.

Not for an instant did she hesitate. She crossed the room to him. As she came he put what he had on the desk.

"My dear!" her arms went about his neck. "My poor dear!"

She felt him trembling in her arms, and with a

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sort of clairvoyance she knew that he had expected something different when she discovered it, and he was profoundly grateful to her. He patted her hand.

"Thanks, Annis."

"What! Did you think—?" She took his hand and led him to the window seat, and made him sit by her. "My poor lad! And I didn't know."

The shaded light at the desk, and even the naked flame of the spirit lamp, hardly illumined the room. There was a friendly darkness to it, and from the window where they were the city lights had not yet begun their hard brilliance. Broadway, a block east, was hushed. The strange, dim hour of feelings and confidences had arrived.

"Been for long, Ian?" she asked, gently.

"Not for so long."

"Is it the work, Ian?" she asked again. "Is it the strain of the work, or is it—is it—is it because you want to, heart of mine?"

"I have been . . . doing a lot . . . and yet . . . Annis, I don't know. . . ."

She put her arms about him.

"Tell me, lover of mine, are you—afraid?"

"Just . . . a little . . . bit . . . afraid."

For a minute she said nothing, but held him closely, and thought and thought and thought. Then she sat back and took his hands.

"Ian dear, do you remember," she told him, "how we used say, last summer, in Tokeneke, that in another ten or twelve or fifteen years at most you and I would go into the country and live there for good? And we would have a place there, and the

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fishing and the sailing and the riding and the golfing all the time—not a stucco bungalow on the water front for a month or two, in a colony of brokers and actors and folk of that type—but a place of acres, an honest-to-God home with a barn and garden, and our own grazing fields, and our own things there—and you would only come in and operate when the King of Siam fell ill?” She laughed.

“Yes, Annis. That’s what I’ve always wanted for us.”

“In ten years, Ian?”

“In less.”

“Ian dear,” she held his hands tight. “In a month we can have that. In four short weeks we can begin on a normal, healthy, sane life in the country. Not a place of our own, perhaps, at first, but a house we can make wonderful with what we have. Not a hundred acres, perhaps, but certainly six or seven. And we can have our horses there. And, Ian dear, you can come in to the New York hospitals for the operations. They need you now and you can dictate your own terms and your own times. And when you are not there, Ian, you can be tramping the countryside with dog and gun. Isn’t that feasible, dear heart? A place like that we can have within an hour and a half of New York. Let us sell this, darling, let us sell this and go.”

“But, Annis dearest, your own work, your own career—”

“Lover mine, I want to whisper you something,” she bent toward his head. “Damn my career! Ian, listen, dear heart; you are my career. I want to love you and help you in whatever you do. Isn’t

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that career enough for a woman? Lover, what use my paltry posturings on the stage, my stilted lines, my settings and costumes, to your great genius and your tremendous gift? I have seen you all but bring the dead to life."

"Listen to me, Ian. Just a few days ago I was wondering to myself what marriage was, and, Ian," she pointed to the spirit lamp and the gleaming syringe on the table, "that—that showed it to me. It is not my life any more. It is not your life. It is our life. I bless God for showing it to me," and awe crept into her voice. The flaming lamp had become to her as the bush that burned with fire and was not consumed. She hid her face in her husband's bosom. "I will bless Him," her voice came to Ian muffled. "I will bless Him night and day."

V

Ian had had to go out that night, a visit to a downtown hospital, and when he had gone she went upstairs to the little sitting room from whose broad window she could see obliquely down the Drive, the edge of New York. The cold, crisp early winter night had set in and in the heavens the stars were burning. Westward over the Hudson the Palisades rose, gaunt, forested, forbidding as in the days when painted Indians roved its paths and the galliot of Hendryk Hudson lumbered northward against the swift current. But here on Manhattan Island the liquid light of stars, and the crisp breeze of winter, and the majesty of the Palisades, and the great dignity of the river were

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flouted by the lights and sounds and the acrid aphrodisiac odors of the monstrous androgyne that New York is.

It seemed to Annis, standing there, that the city below and about her had always drawn men and women to it, like the loadstone island in the tale of Scheherazade. But the magnetic island was a physical thing and the influence of New York was mental.

At first it had been the attraction of the foreign woman, the small-breasted, supple-hipped Powhatan girl, and stanch old adventurers tired of their Walloon wives had ventured over sea for the courting of her—old adventurous Peter Minuet, brusque, coarse, not unkind; the chapman, van Twiller; de Vries, captain-at-arms; the oily Kieft; the bluff Stuyvesant, who loved her as much as he loved Judith Bayard, his wife.

And then changing her role by her strange magic, she had become a buxom Dutch maiden, with eyes blue as ice and great braids of flaxen hair—and a splendid dowry. So that the English coveted her, and among her suitors were a nobler rank than the honest Holland burghers—cavaliers who were of the Stuart courts, who bent the knee to timid James—Governor Nicolls, that affable, superior man; Francis Lovelace, the beau with the silver buttons, and the silver lace, and the cloth of silver trousers, and the silver buckles on his shoon; young Robert Livingston of the Scots; gouty Bellamont, Captain Kidd's friend.

And now she was beautiful, as loved women become, and polished from her courtship by the

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Stuart cavaliers, a woman in her early twenties with her eyes aglow, and bedecked to win the admiration of men of the world, the world that cheered the Hanovers to the English throne. Tight laced, wide skirted, with diamond pendants in her small ears, she was charming Frederick Philipse, the lord of Philipse Manor; and Colonel Beekman, and young Lewis Morris, and de Lancey, the jurist.

And then, suddenly, to test her power, to see her lovers in the forefront of battle, she whispered into the mature ears of MacDougal, and into the young ones of Hamilton and Aaron Burr, of Nicholas Fish and Ogden and Samuel Webb, and Van Cortlandt and the gallant Varnum, and they set her free.

All her history was an incitement of men, Annis thought, moving them to adventure, as she had moved the Dutch; or to greed, as she had done the English; or to high ideals and fine loyalty, as she had done her own sons of an earlier day. A stirring woman, one might or might not like her, but one could not but admire her. Young, proud, capricious, full of power, for centuries she had intrigued the world.

And then for a while she had been a mature, polished woman of the world, and the earth did her gallant reverence. Her boy lovers went out to battle with fife and drum, foot, horse, and guns, that there should be no more slavery in the Americas. From her harbors the clippers raced to Java Head, bringing back tea and spices, shawls and chessmen. They rolled down to Rio and beat about the Horn that she might have the firstlings

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of the California gold. And kings of England had bowed to her, whom but recently she had contemptuously sent home, and great writers voyaged to know her. And lovers of liberty came to ask her interest and protection. Garibaldi in his red shirt, and the great Hungarian, and Parnell, who was so loyal to Ireland and whom Ireland betrayed.

Who were her lovers now? Annis asked. Oh, tragedy! Oh, shame of cities!

She had suddenly become old, old and vile.

She had reached her climacteric, loved, applauded, admired. Then she should have taken on a graceful silvering, until her physical aspect evaporated and she was nothing but spirit, *genius loci*, as Paris is, or London Town. But instead right then she had rebelled against aging, against passionate love's changing into tender kindliness, and she whom gallant old Peter Marye had loved called now on the scum of Europe, Jew and Gentile, offering them herself, her wealth, her dignity, to be enjoyed, to be spent, to be fouled. Her comeliness was gone under a cloud of cheap paint, her fading eyes were bright and hectic with stimulant, her lips that once were sweet and firm were now loose, and moist, and twisted into a cheap jest. A nasty, cheap old woman, followed by a rout who were mainly *maquereaux* of commerce.

Here was worse than tragedy, though: that it was not only the Jew and Gentile of low Europe that New York held in thrall, but the best of her own sons and the best of the country, infecting them with her own terrible neurasthenia, ruining them spiritually, and then mentally, and physically

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last of all, and letting them go with a callow laugh. There were graves in Potter's Field where genius lay, and there were barrooms in the Bowery where magnificent ideals were trampled underfoot like the sawdust on the floor. And the fault was New York's.

A terrible old woman. The Promethean magic had changed her again—or perhaps Fate had changed her despite it—into a black-eyed procuress, somehow Oriental, avid to see men debauched, dealing in strange cabalistic philters, luring by drink, by drugs, by women, making these vices palatable, apparently necessary, even, to offset the strain of the tension she put on her dwellers. And the brave men she dragged to the gutter, the best and finest! Where was Reynolds? Everyone sang his songs now, and wept over the crooning melodies, but he had died in a squalid hotel in a squalid street after a squalid debauch. And Harvey Littleton, that great actor, a madhouse in the South enveloped him. Constance Norreys, Charlotte Cushman's friend, whither had she gone? Ah, Pell Street knew. Janssen, the violinist, who had begun to take a little morphine, "just the tiniest bit," to make him sleep, whither had those poor mad feet wandered? New York knew and kept the joke to itself. And Hines, the lawyer, and Alec Costigan, and Surgeon Jack McCoy? And Norman Strangways, the poet? All that talented and gallant band the vile old woman had made as low as, and lower even than, the Morrisises and Cohens who had come out of Galicia to set up pawnshops in New York; than the Smiths and Joneses and Browns of Birmingham, who had sailed hither to get rich, laugh, and

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go home; than the Murphys and McGintys and McCluskys and any Munster serf who had ever shot from behind a hedge at a gentleman on horseback. It had gotten them all.

But there was one man New York would not get.

Annis drew herself up and looked out. She put her hands on her bosom and looked out proudly. Not while she had youth and strength and beauty, not while she had love and passion, there was one man New York would never get. And that was Ian Fraser.

"You will never have him!" Love had made her strong and confident. "I am your match and more."

There was a knock.

"Yes?"

"Madame!"

"What is it, Florine?"

"Madame, may I come in?"

"Yes, Florine."

She turned from the window as the little maid embarrassedly hovered near the door of the unlit room.

"Yes?"

"Madame! I was disturbed. . . . I thought, downstairs. . . . I felt perhaps . . . madame was crying. . . . The idea came to me . . . I couldn't suffer that . . . that madame should cry. . . ."

"You silly child! Florine, put on the lights."

"Yes, madame."

"Now, Florine, do I look as though I'd been crying?"

Florine uttered a little gasp of wonder.

"Madame," she could not believe her eyes, "Madame . . . madame has the look of queens!"

CHAPTER XI

I

THE more Lafe Wayne thought over the two years of his marriage the more he felt that some great power had taken affairs from his hands and was guiding him in its own tremendous way.

When he had married Georgia he had looked forward on his life with her, and on his career, as a voyage on a river. There would be pleasant meads with spring flowers, with startled birds circling through the air, trailing grasses and red-eyed stoats. And then might come a stretch of desolate and melancholy plain, that might take the heart out of either of them, but with both of them together they could bravely face it, knowing that, as surely as that the water flowed, there would come green meads and blooming harvest lands again. And again his fancy would wander; they would pass through a region of magnificent cliffs, where the eagles barked and strange animals kept their uncertain footing on the ledges. His life—their life—had unfolded itself to his fancy like the voyage of some ancient navigator traveling an uncertain road to a definite splendid city, where tried and good men rest after the toil of the journey.

But somehow his ship was passing, had been

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passing for years, now, through a city, as gondolas pass through Venice. But it wasn't Venice he was passing through, but a bastard township of dreams, out of Flatbush by Broadway, a region of delicatessen stores and cabarets, of restaurants and theaters, of offices and barrooms, where the men groomed in the middle-class fashion were hustling to work, from work, or about work, and the women were either dancing in tightly laced corsets or leaning back in their kimonos, polishing their nails. It was, of its kind, a satisfactory voyage, because as they went on the apartment houses grew flashier, the barrooms more ornate, the restaurants more expensive. The people of the town were, of their kind, quite pleasant. Solid, material, in their way sensible, perhaps a little vulgar, maybe, too, in a minor way, a trifle vicious, they were what was called in their own language "fine fellows," and their womenfolk were "nice li'l wives." A million men would have been content with and proud of this journey, but something within Lafe Wayne made him dissatisfied. He missed the gaunt majesty of the cliffs; he missed even the melancholy marshes. This voyage would not end at the splendid city. It would end at Central Park West.

The providence which had taken him under its benign protection was Chester King.

He had never liked King. Now, after eighteen months' intimacy, he liked him as little as ever, but he had had to revise his estimate of the man. When all was said and done, he was a damned decent fellow, King was, and Lafe often blamed himself for not feeling a sense of gratitude toward him.

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"I guess I'm just not built that way." Lafe let it go at that.

Undoubtedly it was King who had started him on the road to affluence—if you could call affluence spending a power of money and being just three jumps ahead of the sheriff. His salary had gone up until he was now making five thousand a year at the office. The raises had come to him in appreciation of the increased business King brought to the firm. And there had been other things on the outside.

There had been, for instance, that street-cleaning contract that Chester King had put in his way. He received a certain sum from the city, and the idea was to relet the privilege to some Italian or Irish contractor and pocket his profits. A good thirteen hundred dollars he had made out of it, too, but he felt somehow that his hands were unclean after it, and it had only been on Georgia's pleading he had gone into it. First he had turned down King's offer. He and Georgia were having dinner with King at the Beaux Arts.

"Thanks ever so much, but—I'd better leave it alone."

"Suit yourself," the promoter had shrugged. "Personally, I think you're foolish." He looked over the table toward Georgia. "I don't think it's fair to the little lady here."

"What isn't fair to me?"

"I'm giving your husband a chance to make money, and to get into politics in the only sensible way. He's turned me down."

"Oh, Lafe, how can you be so foolish! And you know we can use the money!"

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"But I don't think I'm suited—"

"But, Lafe, what is there to do?"

"There's nothing to do, Mrs. Wayne, but draw the money. There's no work to it. It's just taking advantage of an opportunity." He laughed. "It's nothing in my pocket," he added, with a touch of asperity. "However, let's say nothing more about it."

On their way home that night Georgia hardly spoke to him, and it was only when they were in their bedroom that she turned on him a little fiercely.

"Lafe Wayne, I don't know what's happened to you. What on earth possessed you to act in that way to-night?"

"In what way?"

"To refuse a thing like that! To practically give a man who was trying to do you a good turn a slap in the face."

"I didn't. I only said—"

"You only said!" she broke in. "You only gave him the impression you thought it was something in his pocket. He said as much. Lafe, you don't want to antagonize Chester King, do you?"

"I don't care if I do," Lafe said, sullenly.

"Lafe!"

"Honest, I'd just as soon he'd leave me alone."

"Lafe"—her face filled with sudden fright—"you don't want to lose your job, do you?"

"He couldn't lose me my job," Lafe blurted. But King could put him out of his job, and Lafe knew it, and Georgia knew he knew it. A word from King that the firm wasn't suiting him in his business and the firm would drop him like a hot potato. He wasn't there for his legal ability; Lafe

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was there for what business he could attract, and if he lost King and King's crowd, good night, as the slang went, good night!

The piteous, baffled feeling in his heart must have shown in his face. Georgia relented and took his hand.

"Boy, I know how proud you are, and you don't like favors"—it wasn't that, but he could hardly explain; she wouldn't see—"but, dear, you've got to make an occasional sacrifice. Hon, we can't afford to make enemies. Wouldn't you do it for my sake? Wouldn't you do a little thing like that for me?"

The end was that the next day he called up Chester King and ate crow.

"I knew the little lady would make you see reason. I'll tell you what, she's got her head on her shoulders, she has. Now I want you to come and meet Frank Murphy; he'll fix it up."

Other things came his way, too, half an interest in a ticket-speculating office, and a third of a motion-picture house on Seventh Avenue, crumbs and ends contemptuously thrown aside by King, usually assigned to his Broadway jackals, but occasionally proffered to and accepted by Lafe. He wanted to fling privileges in King's face, but he dared not. No matter how much more he made there was an occasion to spend it. One could hardly refuse to travel with the crowd by which one made one's living. The terrible specter of the lower middle class was gaining ascendancy over him—the fear of the job.

When King came asking a favor he rejoiced, for at least it would ease his conscience, repaying him with work instead of gratitude. But when he heard

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it was to handle a divorce case his heart sank. He felt a sort of quicksand sucking at his knees.

"I don't know if you care to do it, but I would take it kindly if you would. Johnny Mac is a good friend of mine. And there'll be trouble getting the goods on her."

"Well, it can be done the usual way, I suppose. He'll let her get her decree."

"Not damned likely. Johnny's not going to be the goat for anyone like her. She's got to take her medicine."

There were only two openings for action. One was to kick King out of the office. The other was to take the case.

For days the affair haunted him with a dreadful nausea. Everything that was manly in him rebelled at the thought of it—the broken door, the cowering, shamed woman. Surely Georgia would see with him that to touch it was impossible. Lose his job or not, to hell with the filthy business! He told her.

"Lafe dear, you mustn't be so sensitive. The woman's in the wrong, isn't she? She doesn't deserve anything!" Georgia's chin went up cruelly. "Some one's got to get the divorce. It's legal business. That's what lawyers are for, isn't it? Lafe, I don't know what's come over you."

"I don't know what's come over you!" He eyed her savagely and left the room.

II

During the preceding summer he had sent her up to Nantucket, to a summer resort much patronized

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by women of the stage and by the fellows who acted with them in plays, and by a crowd of Broadway notables who believed that to affect the stage folk was to be smart. The sands from which old whaling families had watched for the ships to return from Cape Horn, from Japan, from Polynesia, praying intensely for the men who had gone forth to hunt the sovereign of the seas, were made hideous for some months by the asteroids of musical comedy and vaudeville in costumes that were a very faint and vulgarized echo of Nice and Ostend, and by men who dressed as they fondly imagined gentlemen dressed. There were friends of Chester King going there, and they had persuaded Georgia that it was the only place on earth to spend the summer—"so cute. Dearie, you'd love it!" On occasional week, ends Lafe ran up, and later spent two weeks there. And thither came Chester King for all of a month. . . .

For the first time since his marriage he felt it a relief to be alone, away from Georgia. And to be content away from Georgia, a year ago, would have appeared to him a blasphemy, an egregious impossibility. But now he felt a necessity to think, to orientate himself. He felt as might have felt a Houyhnhnm of Dean Swift's fantasy, whom some supernatural being had saddled and bridled and guided by bit and crop and spur, not unkindly, but firmly and certainly somewhither strange to and undesired by him. It wasn't a bad country, but it wasn't his country—that was all. . . .

He had a slow brain, first class of its kind, the sort of brain that envelops a problem slowly but

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surely and conquers it. Many times during the winter that had passed he had had glimpses of thought about marriage, but in the whirl of work and of evenings spent raucously he had had no time to collect and examine them, and what he wanted now was leisure. He got it in the glorious summer mornings of New York, when the deep streets were like country dells, before the sun had risen high enough to turn them into a boiling caldron, and in the evenings he spent so innocently, on his rides, on long trolley voyages, on trips to Coney Island and Bear Mountain by boat.

His profession made him deal in facts rather than in spiritual quantities, and, thinking over the problem, he understood for the first time what he had always heard referred to—"you must pull together." The Bible said they should be one flesh, but he had always understood that to mean the mysterious alchemy of love, the strange osmosis of passion. It might betoken that, but it betokened something else.

Let him put it this way. Marriage was a partnership, dealing in life as other partnerships dealt in commerce. Each partner should put all his assets in. There should be no holding out, of strength, or kindliness, or passion. The one who held out cheated. They should be loyal to each other and have a single purpose.

That was plain in the face of it. Now another step.

There should be a partner who directed—a sort of senior and junior, as it were. Because of experience or strength or some other quality, one should

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be apportioned more of the work, the work of directing, and the other should be loyalty itself—not subservient, that was not the word, nor obedient, neither was that it—bound to him, perhaps. Even though the director made an occasional mistake, that was no reason for dissolving loyalty. They must hang together and repair it. And the man must be the director. That was natural. Dissatisfied women and spinsters might and did object to that, but they were only women in whom, for physiological reasons, fruitfulness had turned into sex antagonism, as cider turns to vinegar, and, for all their shouting and shrilling, they didn't count. Didn't the Bible say—and apart from religion there was a lot of wisdom in the Bible. Yes, there was!—that the desire of the woman should be to her husband and that he should rule over her?

But what of the woman in marriage?

By God! he reeled with sudden discovery, she made or marred a marriage. She was all the marriage. That was all there was to it.

He tried to find a parallel to fit his discovery, and, changing his metaphor, he thought now of marriage as a steam vessel, of which the husband was the captain on the bridge, the navigator, the one who was responsible, but the wife was the engineer officer, and without her the vessel could not go. The captain might make some port by cajoling, by intimidation, but there would be no sweetness to the voyage unless the engineer officer co-operated night and day. Of course there were poor captains, irresponsible navigators, but even with them the ship got somewhere, if only on a

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reef. But with a lazy, an indifferent, a disloyal officer below, all the vessel did was to stand still, or loll through midocean, a hull upon the waters, a nest of the brooding maggots of irritation, of madness, of vice—a danger to navigation. . . .

Yes, that was certain. Women made or marred a marriage.

And to think that for a voyage that needed co-operation, understanding, science, the captain and the engineer officer choose each other blindfolded by infatuation, by inexperience; how ridiculous, good God! how tragical!

He was getting out of his depth now, but he floundered about, trying to explore still and yet keep his footing. By some convolution of thought there came to him a verse he had once read in a book, what book it was he had forgotten or indeed it might have been in a magazine or newspaper. Whose writing it was he had forgotten, but he knew it was an Oriental poet's. The rhythm had kept it in his head, and he also remembered it because of what he thought was its palpable falseness:

I have not made one complaint against Fortune,
Since I know she acts under compulsion;
The only thing which from time to time troubles me
Is my longing for Lahore.

Only two or three years ago, when he was young and the virility in him seethed like a boiling pot, it had seemed to him that the idea of fate or fortune ruling a man's life was a very abhorrent one. Every man should be the master of his fate, not his fate's agent. To be the captain of his soul, as the poet put it, to him appeared an easy thing for a

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person of determination. Strong, single-minded, confident, any man could be master of destiny. A man fought against destiny, he felt then, and either became destiny's master or destiny his. And two or three years ago, when he was young, there had seemed to him no difference between a man who is married and a man who is not.

And still, he knew, a man fought against destiny, and either became its servant or made it subservient to his will, married or not.

But here was the difficulty. When a man married he gave up his personality as an individual and took on the personality of the union. If the man and woman had become one, strong, confident, self-willed, then they became destiny's owners. But if they weren't one then they were destiny's hacks, no matter how strong-willed or confident each was. It was a camp divided against the enemy, and the enemy always won.

Only two years of marriage, and he recognized now, without bitterness, but with a deep sense of disappointment, that his marriage was not one of the firm, confident unities that defy fortune and make it sweet-tempered and obedient. No! Georgia and he were not one. And nothing could make them one, he felt now. Well, after all, damn it! perhaps he asked too much, and fortune was kind to him, anyway. He had enough to eat, enough to drink, a pleasant place to live. If he hadn't more than a week or so's supply of money ahead, it was only destiny's firm hand on the snaffle, keeping him from putting his head down and bolting, telling him to just try it and see. . . .

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In the first irritations of his marriage, he had never thought of another woman. He would put away even the most innocent "if she were a different kind of girl!" from his mind as infidelity, but now with no thought of physical disloyalty he would think in the purple summer evenings of a sort of dream bride and wife he would love. He had no idea of her appearance, but thought of her as a nice, kind personality who loved him not with passionate need, but with a kind understanding and appreciation of what he wanted to do, and he thought of her with him in some quaint little apartment in New York, content to wait with him until their fortunes bettered, or in some little place in the country where the dogwood and the Canterbury bells and the cosmos bloomed in summer, and it was snug in winter, and there would be babies there, and there would be no trouble or expense thought about in connection with them, because to him they would be her babies, and to her, his.

And later when comfort came to them she would understand and like the things he liked, not the garish emptiness of Broadway, nor the criminal waste of substance in vain things, but a solid and worthy joy in the valuable things of life, what *Whoever It Was* had put upon His earth to use and enjoy, the rapid understanding horses, the rolling meadowlands, the sparkling sea. And the men and women they both would know should be neither the tinselled zany or tailored crook of Broadway, nor the withered quarter-live stock of patroon and colonial blood, with their postures of

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Queen Victoria's time, their vapid heads, their parochial culture, nor they of the newer millions with their band-wagon society, seeking to buy a duke for their daughters, or to buy off a woman from their sons. The people they would appreciate and know would be the men and their womenfolk who were doing their work in the world for the sake of the work itself, and taking their pleasures sanely, mixing work and relaxation in the same quantities and qualities.

"What's the use?" So his dreams always ended. Reality nudged him in the elbow or leered at him from a corner, and the dream wife dissolved into the air, and with her went the happy, sane house and the pattering children, and there came before his eyes the place he worked, his associates who dealt in law as a grocer deals in food, the tinsel companions, the tawdry entertainments, the wife—Oh, damn it all! Forget it!

But thought, the great mystery, is not to be put off and on like a cap or a pair of gloves. It still hovered about him, reminding him how young he had been two years ago and how much he had taken for granted.

I have not made one complaint against Fortune,
Since I know she acts under compulsion;
The only thing which from time to time troubles me
Is my longing for Lahore.

Lahore!
Poor devil of a poet!

CHAPTER XII

I

GEORGIA did not know whether to be very proud or a trifle afraid of the prominence she was attaining in King's set. The men were deferential to her, and the women envious, a little aloof. She understood the reason one day on the board walk of Atlantic City when she overheard a couple of motion-picture actors speak of her

"Say, sucker, pipe the peach in the green stripes. Oh, boy! I could do with an introduction to that chicken."

"Lay off o' that bird, fello', if you don't want a tin ear pulled onto you. That's Chester King's girl."

"Oh, pardon me!" The first speaker caught himself by the lapel of the coat. "This way out, bum! This way out."

She might have been horrified had she known exactly what was meant by "to be a man's girl" in the patois of Broadway. And then again she might not. For the time she had spent in the circles of Broadway had given her a very different outlook to the one she had in Jacksonville. But that was years ago.

The first she knew of impropriety in New York was hearing that various actresses were intimate

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with and not bound in matrimony to various managers, "angels" and the like, and when she expressed abhorrence of these cases she was laughed at.

"Say," she was told, "how do you think those women would get jobs? Why, they wouldn't get jobs in a burlesque chorus." So went the ancient lie, and Georgia believed it, as nearly everyone believed it. Certain actresses themselves had started the fiction as an excuse for their complaisance, and very probably ended up by believing it, for they are an imaginative folk. The explanation of the phenomenon relieved a little of Georgia's shock, and she felt very sorry in her kind little heart for the poor women who had to pay such a price for success.

"Oh, what a shame!" she had exclaimed, indignantly, to her informant, a plump, beautifully groomed woman of forty, wife to one of King's friends.

"It's a tough life, dearie. You don't know the half of it."

She had an idea that these women must be marked by their dreadful experience in some peculiar way—a look of shame, very probably, in the presence of honest women, or perhaps they would try to brazen it out, and had become hussies in appearance and speech. And then she met Patricia Teller, the young ingénue whose name was flashing in electric lights from a Broadway theater, and Jean Borden, the dancer, and Dorothy Altman, who starred in an international *revue*. And she found them no whit different from other women, except

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perhaps that they were cleverer and better looking. And they were awfully pleasant. They were all women with whom she could have been good "pals" were it not for the dreadful matter of their morals. She was intensely surprised to find that they weren't marked in any peculiar way by their improper adventure.

She spoke about it to Chester King, because it worried her a little, and he was so easy to talk to in matters of that kind. Lafe was not. He had no patience with matters of the morals. Either a woman was a chaste woman or she was a damnable slut—for him there was no middle course, no compromise. If one had told him that it was necessary to sacrifice virtue for success on the stage, he would have advocated turning on the gas first.

But King was wise and very understanding. And one could speak of these things to him, and, what was a wonderful thing, he never would take advantage of the conversation to say a thing that would shock, as she was taught to believe most men would. It was a comfort to talk to him, he was so understanding. . . .

"You know, Chess—" She was calling him by his pet name now. Everyone did in that circle. And it was ridiculous in that merry crowd to "Mr. King" and "Mrs. Wayne," though her husband never got any farther than the use of surnames with King. "You know, Chess, the other night, when I met Jean Borden—you know they say she's not a nice girl and—she was so pleasant, so nice in all—but that way, I was surprised. . . ."

"What did you think she'd be, sis?" King laughed.

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"Did you think she'd have cloven feet and a spiked tail?"

"No, but—she seemed such a pleasant, such a good, girl that it didn't seem right for her not to be nice. It isn't, Chess?" She looked up at him. "It isn't right not to be nice, is it?"

"No," he smiled.

"You're laughing at me, Chess." She frowned. "And I'm trying to get this thing straight. Now tell me, what do you think? Is it under any circumstances right?"

"It's hard to say," he sparred.

"No, Chess. You're dodging. Tell me the truth."

"Well, I'll tell you, kid." He leaned forward. "You see you can hardly judge New York by a small Southern town. There everything's drawn in a straight line. If you cross that line you're out. Tell me, in your home town would you speak to Jean Borden?"

"I couldn't, Chess."

"There you are. No matter what the circumstances would be, weight of opinion would be against her. There's all there's to it. Now in New York, on the contrary, everybody minds his own damned business, and expects you to mind yours. You can do anything you like, so long as you don't make a nuisance of yourself. Did you notice that?"

"Yes, I know that."

"Well, then, supposing a girl gets fond of a man, is it any harm to anyone if she loves him a little?"

"I . . . I . . . I don't know."

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"Look at it straight. Forget Jacksonville. Where's the harm?"

She might have told him that it harmed them. That there could be no love of intimate quality worthy of the name without the element of protection: the desire and ability of the man to protect the woman, and the yearning and the right of the woman to be protected. But perhaps she didn't know these things. All she knew she said to him:

"I don't know, but it's wrong. Chess, please tell me it's wrong."

"How is it wrong?"

"I . . . I don't know."

"There you are!"

He lit another cigarette with exaggerated calm. If Georgia had been noticing, she would have seen a slight trembling of his fingers.

"Now, Georgia, there's another thing. You asked me to straighten you out on this, kid, and I'm going to tell you. You're a married woman, and you know there's human needs—you understand. Just because a priest hasn't muttered some words over them and pouched his graft is a man or a woman to live like anchorites all their lives? Oh, Georgia," he laughed, "grow up, kid, grow up."

She might have countered that this was sheer animalism, a disloyalty to the race, the throwing away of godhead and the lowering of oneself to the level of the population of the monkey house. She might have put it as simply as this: that such a viewpoint was disgusting. But she only looked down, blushed faintly, puckered her pretty brows. . . .

King half closed his eyes and looked at her.

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"There's another thing, Georgia, you'll run into a lot. Supposing the man a girl's married to turns a sorehead and a grouch, and she likes another fellow better, and supposing her husband doesn't pay any attention to her, never shows her a good time—or nothing, and she gets fonder of the other fellow all the time, and he's a good pal—hum?"

There was such a thing as the resisting of temptation, but that old-fashioned course seemed to have disappeared under the newer hedonism. New York had already taken such a hold of her that such a thing never occurred to her. She suggested the conventional thing.

"Get a divorce and marry him, I should say."

"Oh, come off," King laughed. "That divorce stuff isn't as easy as it seems. Supposing her friend hasn't any money, supposing he's got a wife somewhere himself, supposing anything, supposing he isn't—well, he isn't a marrying man. Don't worry about divorces. Remember, Georgia, don't hunt for trouble. Let trouble find you. What's she to do?"

"Chess, you puzzle me terribly," she pleaded. "You make me feel I know nothing."

"Well, then, just remember you're only a kid. When you're ten years older you'll understand better. Don't believe what the preachers preach. That's their graft. That's how they make their money. Why, kid, if people acted right there'd be no preachers. They don't want them to act right. They'd be out of jobs, and what else could they do? The only use they are is to give a touch of class to a funeral."

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"Chess, you don't believe all this, do you?"

"Kid," his face grew serious, "do you think I'm on the square?"

"I know you're on the square, Chess," she said, loyally. "I think you're a good man. You've been good to me," she added as corollary.

"Well, I believe it."

She looked aside as some one might who has just heard a deep truth, from an infallible source, which has revolutionized all previous ideas. She was puzzled and a little sad. King laughed.

"Georgia." He patted her hand. "You've got to learn the world, sis. It's not a bad place to know, when all's said and done. In learning anything the secret is relaxation. Relaxing is good for the body, and it's good for the mind. Why shouldn't it be good for the morals, too?" They laughed together. "Relax your morals a little, Georgia. Ingrowing morals are a terrible thing. They ruin the face and the figure and they sour the disposition. Did you ever know a lean woman who was pleasant? I'll bet you never did."

When she arose from the table a strange ophthalmia had come over her mind, so that no longer she saw these matters in definite outline, but blurred in values; not in hues of black and white, but in queer neutral tints of gray. Poor Georgia! Poor little kid! She was like some pretty flying fish of a tropical sea, made for the curling waves and sparkling sunshine and the sustaining bosom of the friendly trades, and she had adventured far below the surface to the deep caverns and sinister shadows of undersea where strange monsters

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lay in wait for prey, marine gnomes with distorted bodies and wallish eyes, with merciless jaws and unhuman cunning. And there Chester King, the cuttlefish, the monarch of undersea, had glanced at and coveted her, and, drawing near, had thrown about her a veil of darkness, with his fluid sepia discharge, after the strategy of his kind. . . .

II

And little by little Georgia came to peruse the sinister pages of the book of Broadway, reading problem and example and answer, becoming acquainted with turbid mysteries and strange habits. The women she met were women of the stage, or the wives of Broadway characters, or the womenfolk of men who dealt in opportunity or luxury: cloak and suit manufacturers, their wives, the wives of downtown brokers, the wives of lawyers who dealt in theatrical contracts, divorce cases, libel suits, and legal blackmail; well-groomed, rather plump women with easy laughter, with the cigarette habit, with a passion for cocktails. On Fifth Avenue they would not be well bred enough to act as housemaids; on Third Avenue they wouldn't be honest enough to be wives to truck drivers, but on Broadway they were the cream of society. Occasionally one of them disappeared for a week or so and it was laughingly said that she was up to Mike Muldoon's getting straightened out.

The men were a strange crowd. First there were the plump, massaged men dressed loudly, "putting up a good front," as their phrase was; they would

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as soon appear in public without their trousers as without a valuable stick pin. Sober, they were "wise," in their patois. They knew that no big man was honest, no woman virtuous. "What's his game?" was their watchword. In liquor they were maudlin. They wept for their dear mother and their sweetheart on the farm, and their idea of musical lyrics was one in which the writer appealed to be sent back to Alabam', or hailed avidly "you Mason-Dixie line." The poetry of these lyrics took their fancy, and the writers were thereupon dubbed classy when they had achieved the riming of "Alaska" with "And ask her," and "California" with "I warn you." Also they were extremely patriotic when, at a play, as of Mr. George M. Cohan's, the national flag fluttered in the wings. There was another section, pallid youths, learned in the vocabulary of the automobile, wearing exaggerated sport clothes on their meager, unmuscled bodies, betting on races and speaking familiarly of the horses as "pigs," though they probably didn't know the difference between a martingale and tail strap. Possibly these were the young of the plump, massaged men, and would grow like them in later years, as the meager, bony colt matures into the stout, rounded cob. Many of these were dopesters and not a few catamites.

Among these were the fuglemen of Chester King. They scouted for opportunities for the investment of his funds. They managed strings of barber shops for him, when he saw a good thing in barber shops. They ran his business for mortgaging motor cars. They operated the hat-check privilege in a

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circuit of hotels. He saw the easy money, and sent these jackals to get it for him. Some of these boys had the ambition to be "classy," so they put on dinner jackets with claret-colored vests, and shirts of startling frills such as are worn by the cheaper kind of men dancers in vaudeville. And they affected the restaurants where "the boss hung out," and so they were introduced to Georgia Wayne, whom they treated with the utmost respect. One or two of these she rather liked, and said so. They were excellent dancers.

"Benny? Benny's a nice kid," King agreed to one of her encomiums, "if he'd only leave the dope be."

"Why, Chess, you don't mean to tell me that boy is a drug addict!"

"Oh, he's not a drug addict." King had the same objection to calling a dope fiend a drug addict that he would have to calling a dipsomaniac a drunkard. The drunkard he would have described as "a nice guy, but when he starts hitting it up, good night! some tank!" But as a "drunk," never. The gentlemen of Broadway have their conventions. Drink is not a sordid thing; it's just a funny one. Drugs are not a tragedy; they're just a bit of a failing. "Benny's not a drug addict. He just takes some of the stuff."

"Chess!"

"Why, you simple little kid! The woods are full of them. There are more sleigh-riding kids on Broadway than there are in Lapland. Jingle, jingle bells!" He laughed. "Look at the pretty snow fall."

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And then he told her, not to her horror, but to her enthralled surprise, that So-and-so, the great comedian, was a snowbird, which means a cocaine user; that Edith Such-and-such, the great tragédienne, was noted for taking dope, which is morphine; that Richard This-and-that, the eminent playwright, could not compose a line unless he had smoked "a couple o' pills o' hop," which is opium.

"And they're not dead?" asked Georgia, in her simplicity. "I thought it killed them."

"They're dead only from the neck up," King laughed. "Anyone who travels that route is a sucker."

"But they're few."

"They're few just like ginmills on Third Avenue. . . ."

III

There is probably no truer moral observation than those lines of Alexander Pope's, the poet's, beginning "Vice is a monster of such hideous mien," but they have been dinned into the ears of school children, they have been gabbled by uplift lecturers, they have been elocuted to the yeomanry at Chautauqua bouts until, when we hear them, we shrug our shoulders and turn away with a concealed yawn. But beneath those easy lines there is truth as deep as any in the Evangels.

When she had seen the theory and practice of Broadway for the first time in its base essentials Georgia had shivered a little. And she had been made to look closer, to watch until the macabre sheen that all evil things have had began to interest

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her. And lo! before she was a half-year in its radiance these things had appeared natural to her. Adultery was no more in New York than flirtation was in Jacksonville, nor were drink or drugs much more of a vice than the smoking of cigarettes. Indeed, illicit unions to her eyes were now a full romantic adventure, with a sporting element of some kind introduced.

"Did you hear," would go the gossip of Pinchbeck Alley, "that Anne Hopkins has split with Al Murphy and has taken up with Irving Kahn?"

"Well, what do you know about that?" And the only comment would be to wonder how they would get on together and how long it would last.

The drinking of Broadway was not the sodden drinking of outside towns or even other districts of the city. It was a hilarious or a witty spectacle. The cocktails and air of Broadway produced a motive gas that drove nerves and brain at break-neck speed. It was the drinking that produced delirium tremens in the end and shattered nerves. The victim was only seen at his best when under the influence of alcohol. His friends and circle of acquaintances never saw the dreadful mornings of nerves shattered to the point of madness. "Al had a bun on last night," was all that was mentioned, "and wasn't he funny? Oh, boy!"

But drug addiction was the funniest of all. The users would say and think the quaintest things in the world. Some pallid-faced youth beside you might break in: "Say, you know the Woolworth Building? Well, I bought that to-day. And do you know what I'm going to do with it—do you?"

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I'm going to move it out into the country and give it to the Audubon Society as a bird cage." Or: "Do you know who cut my hair yesterday? I'll tell you. It was the King of Greece. And it left me strapped, too, I'll tell it. I had to give him all the money in the Subtreasury at Wall Street. And now I'll have to sell Central Park." Or: "Do you know that statue at Twenty-fourth Street and Fifth Avenue? That isn't Farragut. That's me. They put it up when I won the war against Spain." And these things would not cause horror or pity. They would elicit a torrent of laughter. At most somebody would tell him he ought to lay off of that crazy dust, or hum the underworld chanty:

Oh, leave the cocaine be!
Oh, leave the cocaine be!
Drink the ol' rye whisky much as you like,
But leave the cocaine be!

The preacher he stood up,
With the Bible in his han',
And all the sisters over in the Amen Corner
Shouted, That's my man!

Oh, leave the cocaine be. . . .

She had not yet come to embrace the life, as the poet Pope's lines had predicted she ultimately would do, but now everything of it was a commonplace to her, not a phenomenon. She might suddenly have recoiled and fled had any habitu   of Broadway proposed an impropriety to her, or had even those of King's circle let themselves go as they might have. But the command of the Caliph of Forty-

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fifth Street had gone forth: "Go easy on this kid. She's a nice kid." His commands were more than the decalogue to his liege men and women. They went easy on Georgia. The women snaffled their tongues. The men kept their distance. Among themselves they talked. "Chess is crazy about this li'l' uptown jane. She's got a nice map and a classy shape, but she'll never get Lillian Russell's goat. Me! I'd like to see myself go crazy about any broad." And the women raised their eyebrows and said: "I don't see what Chess sees in her, indeed, I'm sure. But every man to his taste, as the giraffe said when he kissed the cow." And those who had been much to King sneered: "Chess is getting old. He likes 'em young. And sentimental. I suppose he's pulling the big-brother stuff. Well, it always goes." And to one another the women spoke: "Why doesn't she stay at home with her husband?" "Why didn't you?" "And why didn't you with yours?" "I wish to God I had!" "And so do I." "'S a tough life. Waiter, tell Jack to mix me a double Martini. You'll have another, dearie? Tell him to make it two."

They all knew whither she was headed, men and women both. It is an old tale that is told in Broadway. But Georgia didn't know. How could she? What does the two-year-old flashing down the stretch know of the rider that guides it, of the wisdom and cunning of a Sloan or a Loftus or a Danny Maher?

CHAPTER XIII

I

EVER since his return from California Georgia had known King was in love with her, and the feeling wore off just as soon as it was made manifest to her that he was not going to be importunate for favors nor was he going to be foolish. She locked the knowledge up in her heart as a little secret that was none of Lafe's business—how could it be his business as long as nothing wrong occurred? And she was so sorry for King!—and was very nice to King. “Dear, dear Chess!” her tender heart spoke, as it would of anyone whom she thought in trouble.

He said nothing, he did nothing to annoy her. She always thought of him as a bulwark of strength back of her. About this love business, he was so nice, so delicate, so chivalrous, never saying a word, though she knew it and everyone else knew it, except Lafe, who had no eyes for matters of that kind! When King and she danced together, in a corner or under a dim light, she could feel him kissing her hair surreptitiously, and how could she be annoyed? Poor fellow! he was content with so little. And he thought she didn't know he was doing it, thought she, so why rebuke him! And it was so pleasant to be loved in that strong, silent, devoted way, and so innocent!

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At times her heart would melt toward him, as on one occasion when Lafe was out of town on her birthday, and he had come to take her out to dinner. He brought her a sheaf of roses, young and straight and beautiful. She gave a little wail of delight and turned to him.

"I must kiss you for those." She put her arms about his neck and gave him a quick kiss on the cheek, and just as suddenly his arms went about her. She pushed him away with her hands.

"No, Chess, no. Don't make me sorry I kissed you." And he let her go with a laugh, his eyes studying her.

And once more she had kissed him. It was while they were on Nantucket, Lafe having returned to the city. One moonlight night she had taken a wrap and gone with him down the pier. The huge August moon was in the sky, and from the shore came the lapping of the wavelets, a chiming nostalgic melody, and beating out Europe way were two sailing vessels—a four-masted schooner and a hermaphrodite brig. The queer magic of the moon and the loneliness of the sea and the singing waves melted her heart, and she stood on the pier looking northward to the Pole, with a tremendous longing in her heart that was the longing of love. The compelling mystery of the night awed King beside her, and he threw his cigar away.

He took her hand, and she permitted him unconsciously, and he put his arm about her waist, and she just kept her eyes northward to the Pole. Then King caught her in his arms and kissed her.

For a second she remained there and it would

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have been tremendously easy for her to have remained there all the night, so thirsty had her heart suddenly become for love, and so gentle had she come to feel toward Chester King. But, after all, she was Lafe Wayne's wife, and she wrenched herself away from the temptation.

"No! no! no!" She became free.

He looked at her for a minute. And he pondered: "If she will not let me love her to-night, under this moon and by this sea, and her husband far from her, then of her free will she will never come to me." . . .

"There's no chance, Georgia?"

"None, Chess. Don't ask me. I'm Lafe's wife."

"And yet you don't love Lafe."

"I admire and respect Lafe."

"You don't love him, Georgia."

"I don't know, Chess. I ought to, God knows. But this last year perhaps I have changed."

"Do you love me at all, Georgia?"

"I am fond of you, Chess. But not that way, my dear."

"If you aren't in love with Lafe any more and if you are fond of me, Georgia, then why—?"

"I know it would be a foolish reason, Chess, to anyone" (so Broadway had taught her), "but to me there's a reason why not. Because I am Lafe Wayne's wife."

She took his arm and walked back up the pier. Before they turned into the town she stopped.

"So don't ever speak again, Chess. Promise me you won't." She stood on tiptoe and gave him a dainty kiss on the cheek. "Promise me, Chess, you never will." And she wept a little.

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And as he promised he was thinking to himself: "Well, by God! if she doesn't come by inclination, she'll come by force . . . but wait!" . . .

That night after and succeeding days Georgia had thought to herself how terrible that would have been if Chess had spoiled things. The next morning he had left for New York, but there was nothing extraordinary about that; that was his set day; and as she saw him off at the pier he was just her dear old Chess, not an ounce of evil in him, kind, devoted, wise. . . . How terrible it would have been had matters been changed!

It had been hard not to have been a little kinder to him, for he had been tremendously kind to her. All the pleasure of her life in New York had come from King. Lafe would not have spent a tithe of what King had spent on her entertainment, not even a twentieth part, nor could he have. And only for King she would have been out in the country with Lafe in some terrible suburb. King had always come to the rescue. She had only to say to him:

"Lafe's got 'em again!"

"What's biting him this time?"

"Oh, the usual thing! Costs too much to live in the city. We must cut down. Out in the country living's so cheap."

"Oh, well," King would laugh, "we'll see what we can do." And he put in Lafe's way, or forced on him, some new opportunity to make easy money, and Georgia would prevail on her husband to wait until summer when it would be warm, or until autumn when the renting season would begin, or

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until spring when the grass was green. Anything at all . . . but wait, wait, wait. . . .

And other times King had helped her in ways Lafe would have been unreasonably savage about. It was the matter of clothes. Lafe had no idea what they cost, and the price of a new hat would have made him throw a fit on the floor. He always thought that the best of things were attainable at Tracy's at a price ridiculously cheap. And that a dressmaker in a by-street could make clothes indistinguishable from Hickson's. And what could one do? What could she have done only for King's taking an occasional flutter for her in the stock market, on something on which he had inside information, or backing a horse at Bowie, or Lexington, or Belmont Park, and giving her her winnings? And twice he had lent her a hundred dollars. He had forced it on her and shut her up.

"You claim I'm a friend of yours, don't you?"

"Yes, I do, Chess, but—"

"What's a friend for if not to help you out when you need him?"

"But about paying back, Chess—"

"Don't worry about that just now. We'll make a killing some of these days and let you in on it. And then I'll let you pay back. . . ."

II

The time had come to go back to New York. No longer the sun dared dally around Nantucket. It must go on its mysterious planetary path. A chill crept into the air and the waves sang no longer a

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song of romance and shadows, but took on a sharper, more forceful note, and the birds gathered themselves into great caravans for the journey southward. And the summer folk shivered and went with them, leaving Nantucket to the majesty of the Atlantic and the stinging, savage winds that come southward from the Pole.

And indeed Georgia was none too loath to go, for the nostalgia of New York was on her, and there was a great thirst in her to see again the glittering lights of Broadway and to mingle with the crowd that went up and down and to and fro in it—the strutting actor, and the glib salesman, and the neat, poverty-haunted clerk, and their women-folk with their new, exaggerated, clothes, and to breathe the stimulant air, and to hear the clangor of the cabarets and the rippling laughter of the theaters, or to join in their hysterical tension. . . . She was avid for New York, body, bouquet, and lees. . . .

And she had not been a day down, no! hardly an hour! before Lafe began to talk about leaving the city and going to Leonia, or Astoria, or some place of the kind. Wouldn't that sicken you? Wouldn't that make you just tired? Hardly a minute back, and he begins the old song and dance. Leonia! Astoria! Well, they'd see!

She called up Chester King.

" . . . and do you know, Chess, he's at it again. He's rung in a new one this time. Astoria. Honest. And I don't like the tone of his voice. . . .

"Come to lunch? I'd simply love to. . . . Wherever you say. . . . Oh, Chess! Naughty,

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naughty. . . . Honest, I'd love to go. . . . One o'clock? All right! I'll be there!"

Yes, Chess would fix it up. That was a cracker-jack suggestion of his—to swing some deals on Lafa which would keep him in town of nights. That would fix him.

Oh, it was so good to be back in New York! The life, the excitement, the adventure of it! And Chess, dear old Chess! who knew the city as a minister knows his Bible, had always some good suggestion to make. To-day they were going to lunch in the Champs Élysées, that new French place just opened. And they were to have a private dining room! One of those places . . . Oh, it was darling! And it was naughty . . . and it was so safe.

Dear, kind, safe, old Chess!

III

It was like a bachelor's sitting room in some bijou flat: a couch, a few chairs, a few prints of and after Fragonard, "Les hasards de l'Escarpolette," and the like. Two windows that looked on an air shaft. That was all, except for the table between them, and the elderly waiter bringing in food and cocktails. . . .

"Now, you can clear away."

All through the meal Chess had talked easily, fluently. A war had broken out in Europe, and already King had his plans laid. It was to last a very long time, so an English general had judged, and King was making contracts to deliver to the

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combatants boots and equipment, so there was a tremendous lot of money to be made and work to be done. There would be work for Lafe that would keep him busy night and day.

"Oh, Chess, you are a dear!"

The waiter had cleared everything away and was standing deferential at the door.

"Is there anything more, sir? A cocktail? A bottle of wine?"

"Nothing more, thank you. Just clear out." And he went over and locked the door behind the man's coat tails. Crossing the room quickly, he caught up Georgia in his arms and kissed her.

"Chess!" she fought herself free. "Chess! Let me go! Oh, you promised—Chess!"

He let her go and went over and leaned against the table. He watched her as she looked at him reproachfully and fixed her hat that had been turned slightly awry.

"Now, look a-here," he snapped at her. "We've had enough of this damned nonsense! Are you going to come through or are you not?"

"I—I don't understand you, Chess."

"Oh yes, you do! Are you going to be to me what I want you to be or are you not?"

"I can't, Chess. Oh, don't you see? I couldn't. How can you?"

"Then you're going to welsh?"

"Welsh? Welsh?"

"I said welsh. Now look a-here, you, you've known I was crazy about you ever since I met you. And any time you didn't want me around you

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could have said so. But you didn't. See? No. You let me spend every cent I wanted to on you. You took my presents. Your husband took my money. Those jobs I handed him—what did you think I was going in for? Charity?"

"I didn't know, Chess. Honest to God, Chess, I didn't know."

"Well, you know now, don't you? You knew all along, too. That it was only me and my money that was keeping you away from Astoria and East Orange and the places you hated. You knew that, didn't you?"

She had turned away and was looking out of the window, at nothing, grasping the heavy curtain. A terrible agony was in her face, and for an instant she thought of opening it and hurling herself out, but heroines of that kind are of the stage, not of life. So she whimpered a little, silently.

"I'd have been better off there. Yes, I'd have been better off," she said.

"That isn't the question." He seemed to be hitting her with words. "What are you going to do? Now I'll show you the kind of fellow I am. You can walk out of that door—see?—and go to Flatbush and Astoria with your husband, and you can stay there and be damned to both of you! Me, I never forced a woman in my life to do anything she didn't want to!"

"Oh, Chess!" she cried from the window. "It's all I have left. Don't, please, don't."

"I'm not forcing you. You've had the money. You've had a peach of a time. You can welsh if you want to. That's up to you."

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"It would have been all right in Flatbush."

"Oh, cut that! That isn't the question. What are you going to do? Are you going to come through or are you going to welsh on it?"

"I've had the good time." She turned from the window. "Yes, I see it now. I've had the good time." She looked at him brokenly. "I'm not a welsher, Chess. I'll—I'll—I'll come through . . ." she ended up, sobbing. . . .

IV

The maid might have been reading it, or at a pinch her husband, but whoever it was, there it lay on the table when she entered, like a situation in some dollar writer's tale, a Bible such as the Gideons distributed. And because she was faint, and sick with self-disgust, and dazed not a little with shock, she picked it up, as one might pick up an unfamiliar object. And the pages fell open for her and she read:

And behold, there met him a woman with the attire of a harlot. . . . (She is loud and stubborn, her feet abide not in her house: Now is she without, now in the streets. . . .)

She dropped the volume as though it had stung her, and because it had stung her, and she gave a frightened cry. For an instant she sat there motionless, with her mouth awry and her eyes fixed in a manner of horror. The book exercised a terrible fascination for her, so she picked it up again and read through the whole passage.

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“So that’s what you’ve been let in for, poor Georgia!” she all but cried, and she put it down, her eyes still on the last words of the chapter:

Her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death.

Book III

THE HIDING OF THE WIND

CHAPTER XIV

I

SHE moved across City Hall Square with little, mincing footsteps, as though her knees were hobbled, her body forward to the wind, her face, shaped like a page's face in a painting of some quattrocentist artist's, furrowed with discontent. So she left every day, and especially Saturday, the office of the Sunday Magazine, where she worked. Sheila was dissatisfied.

They didn't like her in that office. She felt they didn't. They were jealous of her. That is what they were. Because she was different, she told herself, because she had brains, because she had a college education, they all hated her.

Oh, she could see through them all. That was what was the matter with them. They knew she could see through them. Potts, for instance, the editor, the fat man who had had five wives. He knew nothing. He only made a bluff at it. Lucky Potts, he ought to be known as. He was lucky even in his marriages. Why, hadn't this last wife of his got a sanatorium, where they trimmed the patients out of a thousand a quarter? Nolan the copy reader, who wore a shade over his eyes and chewed tobacco, a beefy man who lived in Bay Ridge, he was an ornament to any office! Banks, the artist—dirty

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little Jew! Though you had to admit the fellow had talent. The other reporters—what a pack! The two other women—the fashion artist, everyone knew what she had been, though she called herself a buyer on her trip abroad. Buyer indeed! Seller was more like it! And the other interviewer, Jane Buchanan, with her red hair and red face, with the cigarettes she rolled herself and the ginger-ale high-balls she drank regardless of number, how people could like her was more than Sheila could understand.

She turned down Chambers Street toward the station of the Sixth Avenue Elevated, and as she came around that busy corner she touched her bosom where her week's salary was hidden, to make certain she still had it. Thirty dollars—good wages even for a man! And yet her soul rebelled again. Of all that office force she received least money. Potts had his hundred and fifty a week. Even the copy reader had forty. Banks, the artist, drew his hundred. The fashion expert got seventy-five—Sheila sneered. Arens, the managing editor, never gave anything for nothing. And Jane Buchanan got seventy-five. Well, if one had to drink and smoke with that crowd to get seventy-five, she would rather not have it.

Oh, but it was so unjust! What was the use of brains and of an education if men and women like these, lacking even common intelligence, and who wouldn't know a split infinitive if they saw one, were to get more money than a person who had spent years of preparation for the work? Tell me that.

The slender figure and trim hat bowed to the

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wind caught the eye of a red-headed messenger boy lounging nonchalantly along with some errand of importance, and whistling uproariously with the sheer exuberance of spring. The gamin's eye studied her points with the cool appraisal of an expert.

"Well, the nearer the bone—" he pondered.

As she passed he caught her eyes and winked squarely. She cast him a look of venom.

"Oh, kiss me, baby," he hollered, ironically. "I'm full of vinegar."

II

In figure she was nearly like one of those women whom Bartolommeo di Venezia loved to draw, slim, sinuous, long of hand and foot, with an all but epicene bosom, high shoulders, and a boyish waist. A little more tissue and she would have been exactly the type. Her face, in certain lights and at certain angles, was very striking and immensely pretty. The features clear, the eyebrows slim, the nose fine, the mouth firm. Her black hair—what there was of it, as a woman would say, sleek and glossy. Her eyes were gray, steely gray.

Give her a little more flesh. Give her kindly eyes, a fuller mouth. Give her graciousness. Take off those vile coeducational garments of brown and indecisive blue she wore and give her a frock of apple green. Slipper her correctly, and have her hair done by a man who knew his business, and you had there a sweetheart fit for a king or a great artist. But you had to give her kindness.

At first sight she was very pretty in certain

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lights and at certain angles. But if you studied her closer, the second time you saw her, you noticed a little fretwork of lines in the forehead that should not have been there in so young a girl. You noticed the hard eyes, the petulant mouth. You noticed the air of being on guard with you.

In a figure and face like that there should have been no sex appeal. She ought to have been for the eye alone, as a statue is, or a boy. But somehow there was a striking vortex of emotion in her. She milled within herself every thought and feeling, treading a ceaseless, uneasy round, as impounded cattle will.

Men like her at first sight. There is always an attraction about pretty blue stockings. Their semi-education has the same allure as a cunningly placed patch or an ankle watch. Men say, "Here is a woman who will understand me, my complex emotions, my unappreciated brains." So they felt about Sheila Hopkins, and they invited her to lunch, to a theater party, to dinner. Many did that once. Few did it again.

They came, they saw, and it wasn't worth while to conquer. When a man takes a pretty woman out to dinner or a theater he lays aside the armor of hardness which he had put on to fight the battle of the world. He is placid, relaxed. He is therefore more easy to hurt. The chivalry of women, which is misnamed gentleness, understands and is tactful toward him. But Shiela Hopkins did not subscribe to this convention. What did she know of chivalry who only thought of herself? So if a man considered he had brains she showed him he hadn't, in a few

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deft phrases. If a man considered himself of social importance, she made ironical remarks such as: "I suppose you will be playing polo at Aiken this winter," or, "Oh, my! this Narragansett Pier stuff is 'way above poor me!" If a man preened himself a little on his athletic prowess, and tried to prance a little before her as men occasionally will, she insinuated that he was a liar. This was her idea of smartness, of repartee.

So the men who thought they had seen in Sheila Hopkins a garden inclosed decided she was an unprofitable, inimical piece of fallow land, of stones, or briars and nettles. They went their way quietly, and when they never asked a second time Sheila sneered. She would see them again with pretty, fluffy companions, who had not one-tenth of her brains, but had one hundred times her gentleness and kindness and intuitive wisdom.

"All men care for are empty-headed dolls," she raged.

But to every woman one man, as to every man one woman. And Sheila had one who was never tired of taking her out, who never winced at her repartee, who was genuinely, deeply in love with her, and this was Anthony Sheridan, the poet.

Poets are, like painters, a strange people. They look at people and at things from a slightly awry angle, and see peculiar lights, peculiar beauties in them to which all of the world are blind, until they are translated into terms of rhythm or color. They see nature and give us art, a fictitious thing, for nature is to art as an Idaho colt to a dressed polo pony. What Sheridan saw in her was a figure

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of Bartolommeo da Porto, the face of a page of Botticelli. He took off her ridiculous and ugly clothes and gave her frocks of apple green, of black lace, of rich white like a priest's vestments. He saw her in that pleasant little home and garden up New Canaan way which would be his when his aunt—dear old lady—should finish her days, and which would be his now were he to marry and bring his bride home.

And so he saw her, a poet's bride in a poet's setting.

I think they know very little of human nature, these poets. If they did—well, to put it bluntly, there would be less poetry, that's all! Of women, which with flowers and gardens should be the main study of their life, they know nothing. Else why should it be one moment "lure of the fallen seraphim" and the next "a rag and a bone and a hank of hair"? One moment a ballad of his lady's beauty and the next "the faithless one!—she left me here to die"? They impress me as being, in the language of the race track, "bum pickers."

For a gentleman born, there was too much of a streak of commonness in Sheila Hopkins; for an honest lounge, there was too much damned superiority about her; for a man of the people, she had nothing, no useful accomplishments, no warm virtues. But for Anthony Sheridan she was the one woman in the world.

III

You mightn't like poets—few people do!—but you couldn't help liking Anthony Sheridan. He

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was not effeminate, as most poets are, nor did he go to the other extreme and "be strong, have guts" as a few do. He was just a likable, well-behaved, healthy boy of twenty-four, with a great talent for versification. Fair, ruddy, rather less tall than Sheila, he was the sort of lad that a good school and an unspoiled university turns out. He could look you in the eye squarely, and with, if you were entitled to it, respect. He was courteous to older men and very courteous with old ladies. He was unaffected with girls. Men liked him.

A great-grandfather had made his money in whaling, at a time when the Connecticut ports would send forth their quota of hunters to join the great fleet from New Bedford and Nantucket. And this money had been shrewdly invested by capable Yankee lawyers until it brought in the wherewithal to keep a New England family in state. Recently it had been sunk in a local railroad scheme, and, whatever had happened to it, it shrank until there was not left a sufficiency to bring in more than eighteen hundred dollars income. That was what Anthony Sheridan had, besides the certainty of inheriting the fortune and home of his aunt, Martha Lockwood.

Three generations of sufficiency of money had turned the family of whaling folk into people of culture, as the word is. Quiet, unaffected, dignified, strict as to morals, rather broad as to religion, it is a type known in every New England town. Their house is mellow with furniture of a bygone day, highboys, grandfather clocks, broad open fireplaces, not often lit, but taking the eye with glittering

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brass. On the tables are books of the solid kind, and yet such as gentlewomen can read without blushing. On the table is a copy of the current *Atlantic Monthly*, where one reads improving articles on the politics of Europe, and mannered verse. And for the younger folk there is *Harper's Magazine*, with its notable short stories, its hair-raising accounts of how a woman missionary penetrated to Ceylon, its instructive articles on the flowers of the Balkans. *Scribner's* and the *Century* you rarely see, extreme youth being discouraged.

They are a curious folk, and you have to accord them respect. Hardly a lecturer of importance tours the country but they hear him. Hardly a new piece of good music is written but they know it. It is a duty on them to be well informed. They have as good a grasp of Irish politics as most Irishmen. They deplore the lax state of morals in Japan. They wonder how the Prince of Monaco's conscience permits him to accept revenue from the tables of Monte Carlo. They know the ins and outs of these things perfectly.

And yet—they haven't the faintest idea of how the political gang in the town below the hill is cleaning up on them. They don't suspect that in the Greek coffee-houses in the same town women are being bought and sold for a twenty-dollar bill. They are ignorant that in Kelly's garage chauffeurs are shooting "African golf" or "Hungarian marbles" with a couple of hundred dollars on the floor. They glory that the Chinese opium habit has been stamped out in the yellow commonwealth, but they little suspect that in their own New England town, at the

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foot of the hill, the chop-suey restaurant or the Chinese laundry, as the case is, is but a blind for a "hop joint," and that the town has its score or more of addicts. Solomon remarks that the fool's eyes are on the ends of the earth. And yet these people are far from being fools.

They are interested in vice on a big scale because it is an economic factor of importance. In small doses it is merely bad taste. Serene, dignified, admirable, they go through life with their head high, restrained in taste, restrained in action. Their notable closeness as to spending of money is not meanness, it is restraint. It is the strain that brought forth the tinker of Bedford jail who wrote for us the *Pilgrim's Progress*. By God! it's a good strain!

IV

And this was the strain that produced Anthony Sheridan, the poet. Well bred, well read, begotten by decent people in a decent milieu, he was a lad that a town and even a state might be proud of. He would never set the world on fire, or even the country. He was no Shelley, no Keats, no Coventry Patmore. He had undeniable ability. A little volume or two with a well-regulated fire burning in it; a regular appearance in the columns of the *Atlantic*, of *Harper's*, of *Scribner's* and the *Century*, occasionally in the poets' corner of the *Saturday Evening Post*, that would have been all—and enough.

This may not seem much of a life work to you or to me. When we want poets we want our Shake-

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speares and our Brownings—torrent and flame; and the minor poets twanging their lyres are to us the droning of so many bees. But we are wrong; a piece of verse at the end of a magazine article is as welcome as a draught of spring water. And there are fifty thousand folk and more in whose battered hearts the fire of romance flickers again at the reading. They are the food of young folk in love. They are the solace of the old women. There is decidedly a place for the minor poets in our life of America; it may be apart from grandeur and from struggle, but it is there for Anthony Sheridan and his like. England has a poet laureate and a pension list for innocuous literary men. In France he would be a personage of importance. In Germany that was he would have been decorated. In Ireland he would have been a leader of politics, as poets are in that topsy-turvy country. In America the least we can do is not to be impatient with them overmuch, exalting the cheesemongers, the hay-and-feed dealers, the motion-picture actor over their heads. . . .

He had talent. He had sufficiency of money. He had had poems printed and had poems in his pocket. He came to New York to mingle with his peers—and why shouldn't he? He attended meetings of poetry societies and this and that. He sat in the Hotel Brevoort, and drank more than was good for him. He had headaches in the mornings, as all young poets have. He talked of free verse with his companions. He had lunch with a few editors and publishers. He met Sheila Hopkins. . . .

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V

She knew from the first day that he was in love with her, and to see a man's interest in her increase rather than decrease as the hours passed on was such a new sensation that she all but forgot to be insolent. And she liked him, she liked the deep sky-blue of his eyes, and an untidy lock of fair hair that strayed over the right temple. He was not so tall as she was—she didn't like that—but otherwise . . .

Of course she couldn't refrain from handing him a nasty dig every hour or so. He read her, at her own request, a poem he had written, "The Birds Come North Again. . . ."

"I suppose your next effort will be an 'Ode to a Skylark'!"

"No, Miss Hopkins. Why?"

"Shelley wrote one. Don't you think you are better than Shelley?"

He smiled. She was just joshing him. What a girl she was, with her sense of humor, with her face like a medieval acolyte's, with her figure slim and lissom as a jonquil. Brains, too, she had—plenty of them.

"I wonder if you would think me presumptuous," he asked her, "if I were to ask you to come to an opera with me to-night. Maria Gay is singing 'Carmen,' and Pavlova is dancing."

"I would go with anyone to see Pavlova," she accepted.

On the whole, she liked to have him around. It was a relief to find a man who was not attracted by pretty, empty-headed dolls. And, besides, he was a

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respectable-looking man to have around with her, well dressed, clean. And, moreover, he was an accepted poet already. It was pleasant to have him wait for her in the hall of the semiliterary boarding house where she lived—to have the copy writer at the advertising agency point him out to the assistant editor of the *Woman's Age* as the author of the lyric, "I Shall Not Hear the Trees," in the current *Atlantic*.

"Oh, you don't say! He doesn't look the least bit like a poet."

"Oh, gee! kid, get wise! That François Villon stuff is over. Poets nowadays are like business men. Boy, you couldn't tell the difference between them and an efficiency engineer. I bet that guy dictates his poems to a stenographer."

"Tell me, Mr. Gouse, what exactly is an efficiency engineer. I've always been dying to know—"

At the office, too, they had noticed the devotion of the poet for her, and were always alluding to him as Miss Hopkins's house-broken poet, in their coarse idiom. They seemed to consider him her property.

"I saw that poet of yours at the Lafayette last night," Banks, the artist, informed her. "He was collecting some young bun. Boy! that guy hates liquor just like a cat hates milk—"

"Well, if he was getting a bun on," Sheila told him, sweetly, "he was paying for it himself, which is more than some people I know do."

The reference to Banks's economical drunks shut the illustrator up like a clam. Behind her back he looked at her with bitter distaste.

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"I always said," he muttered to himself, "them poets is suckers. . . ."

In all her life—in the little Michigan town where she had been born and raised; at Ann Arbor, where she had gone to college; in her two years of New York—she had had no man she could call her sweetheart until Tony Sheridan came. And because she felt it was the privilege of every woman to have a man buy lunches for her, theater tickets, accompany her hither and thither, she accepted his courtship, not because she liked him, but she felt it was her due. Because other girls were being kissed, and because it was from all accounts a delectable experience, she permitted him to kiss her, so that she might not miss another thing that was the privilege of young women, as favors are at a cotillion.

"Do you know," she told him in the darkness of the doorstep when he brought her home from a symphony concert, "that is the first time I've ever been kissed."

"O my dear heart!"

"O Diana, silver goddess of the Ephesians," he chanted a litany to her on the way home. "O pure and graceful swan! O chaste as the new moon! O sweeter than heather and purer than lilies! O lover of one man, my own, my sweet one!"

As she let herself in and heard his retreating footsteps she decided coldly that she had missed a lot in life, until now. . . .

As much as she could be in love with any person she was in love with him. It was pleasant to be loved by a poet, who was at every moment of the

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day thinking of her, as she knew. Every line he wrote was tinted now by her. He said the loveliest things to her. His kisses were sweet. It was a great pity he wasn't a greater man—she felt that a Goethe or a Victor Hugo would have lost nothing by loving her.

She asked herself, "Am I in love with him?" She answered, truthfully: "No. I am very fond of him. Perhaps I do love him. I can't tell."

It's hard, nevertheless, to kiss a man, to hold his hand in theaters—even though it's done for the sake of pleasant experience—and not grow somehow fond of him. At occasions she felt a flood of kindness toward him. And she seldom any more nagged at him as she did at others. Perhaps her conscience reproached her, he was so good to her.

"Do you know, I'm getting quite fond of you, Tony?"

"Sheila! Sheila dear!" There was a look of dumb devotion in his eyes that was pathetic.

"Do you know what an easy time of it you have? When I think of your having money enough to do nothing but enjoy yourself and write poetry, while I have to slave down in that office, unappreciated, envied, disliked, it makes me mad. Some people have nothing but luck."

He gulped a moment.

"Sheila," he approached, "you don't have to slave one moment more in that office."

"I don't, don't I? How do you make that out?"

"I want you to marry me."

"I thought poets didn't believe in anything but free unions." She could not forbear to utter a gibe.

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"Don't, Sheila, don't, please! I mean it."

The laugh went out of her eyes, and a searching expression came into them.

"I want you to marry me, Sheila," he said. "Listen, dear. I have a little place out New Canaan way, the funniest house you ever saw. It's up on a hill, and a queer garden about it. It looks just like a house out of a fairy story. The rooms are long and low-ceilinged, and a fireplace in each one; and the cellars are stocked with logs of applewood that burn like coal. And all the furniture is very old and very mellow—chairs with strange high backs, and clocks that are hundreds of years old, and still keep time as though it were a sacred trust. And there are strange old prints on the wall, and samplers made by children who were young with Washington. And in the drawing-room there is a spinet.

"And in the garden there are yew trees everywhere, and a sundial. And where there are not flowers there is a lawn green as a bowling green. There are few patches where there are no flowers—crocuses and primroses and daffodils in the spring, roses and mignonette and stock in the summer, Canterbury bells and cosmos in the fall. And all the trees are apple trees, all bloom in the springtime and bear fruit in autumn. And in all your life you never conceived of as many bees as there are in that garden, golden bodies and a bourdon song. Their skips are by the wall, yellow as the honey within them.

"And that house lit by old oil lamps, and wax candles in heavy silver sticks that Paul Revere made, with the apple logs burning in the fireplace,

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would bring the quiet of Christ to the most troubled heart. And perhaps there is a new moon in the garden, and you have never known a moon as lovely as the moon seen through the apple trees of our garden. . . .

"If the king's daughter wished to leave the bustle and majesty of court, and wished to find one place in the world to be happy in and still feel she was a king's daughter, she would choose our house and garden. . . .

"And that house is yours, Sheila, and that garden, and me, and my poor gift of rhyme, if you will only marry me and take us."

"That's all very interesting indeed, I'm sure, but what about my career?"

"Your career?"

"Yes, my career!" she said, with a touch of asperity. "You don't think I've gone through college, studied, slaved, endured that horrible office, and all just to leave them and go and marry a man."

"Then you won't marry me?"

"I haven't said I would," she smiled, "but I haven't said I wouldn't."

CHAPTER XV

I

SHEILA had been sent to the Plaza to get a story about the French dancer who was said to have cost a king his throne, and had come away wroth, as she always did after meeting any person to whom respect and credit were given. "That dirty little courtesan," she was telling herself, "has a presidential suite, while I . . ." At Forty-fourth Street she met Annis Fraser.

"Oh, Mrs. Fraser! I thought you had deserted the city for good."

"Little Sheila! The very person I'm looking for. I hate to have tea alone, and I want it badly." She led her to the Oak Room of the Ritz.

"And how do you like living in the country—for good, I mean?" she laughed. "I just got an invitation to go and live in the country the rest of my life. A man asked me to marry him."

"And are you going to?"

"I don't—know."

Annis looked at her smilingly. The tragédienne knew that the young girl was practically asking her advice.

"Do I know him?"

"It's Anthony Sheridan, the poet."

"Sheila," Annis said, seriously, "Anthony Sheri-

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dan is a fine boy, and one of the few poets we've got. You couldn't do better. Are you in love with him?"

"I—don't—know. I'm very fond of him, and I like him immensely."

"If you care for him, you ought to marry him and take care of him."

"Take care of him," Sheila laughed. "I'm not marrying a man to take care of him. I want him to take care of me."

"He'll do that. But you've got to do your own share, you poor child! I'm so glad." Annis leaned over and patted her hand. "It'll be such a relief to get away from that office."

"If I marry him, I won't give up my job."

"But why, Sheila?"

"Mrs. Fraser, do you think it fair for a man to ask you to give up your career when he marries you?"

"Now, tell me straight, my dear, what is your career?"

"Well, I might write," she said, uncertainly, "plays—or a big novel."

"A play, my child," Annis told her, "is more technical than a sonnet. It's as different from writing as building is from architecture. Take my advice, leave that alone."

"Well, then, novels."

"Sheila, my dear, writing is a gift from God, like a wonderful voice. And besides, you've got to be steeped in romance to the finger tips, and you've got to know life like a well-thumbed book. You don't—you can't know anything of the values

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of life. And I've never noticed any romance in you, Sheila."

"I can edit a magazine."

"A magazine is a poor substitute for a husband; you can't edit a magazine and take care of children."

"Oh, but—" She stopped.

"But what?"

"You do beautifully, Mrs. Fraser." Sheila switched to conversation. "You have your career—and everything."

"I am giving up the stage, Sheila."

"Mrs. Fraser!"

"Yes, I'm giving up the stage." She smiled. "I'm going out in the country to take care of my husband and my house, and to have babies, if God is good to me."

"But, Mrs. Fraser"—Sheila was frozen with horror—"your career! The stage! To leave it all! It's a dreadful thing."

"Oh no, it isn't," Annis told her, with firm certainty. "Not in the least. Sheila, it's the only thing in life for a woman. . . .

"Heartily know,"

she quoted softly,

"When half-gods go
The gods arrive. . . ."

II

The early summer had wandered into New York, and around Washington Square it began building its nest like a returning bird. Southern Fifth

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Avenue expanded in the coming warmth, and on the green buses that commenced their journey at the arch and traveled north to the utmost confines of the island young women and boys took up the sweethearting that had been dormant since fall and pursued romance.

But their romance and love meant nothing to Sheila Hopkins as she looked out of the window of her boarding house at the dignified Avenue. The young women and the young men were thinking of love alone, but she was thinking of marriage. And the young women were asking themselves, Is this for all time, or is it the Blossoming of the Bough that Blossoms every Springtime? And Sheila was asking herself, This marriage—what is there in it for me?

Most women wanted a home and babies—a home of their own. But somehow the idea of a house or even of an apartment was repellent to her. It spelled domestic trifles that she did not care to cope with. Why should a person have a house or even an apartment when it was so easy to have a room, furnished, with all the work done for you, for a negligible sum? They cooked so much better in restaurants, too, than they did at home, she felt. As far as babies went, the idea of them somehow revolted her. For a person of refinement and education and brains there was something utterly disgusting about the bringing forth of offspring as animals bring them forth—ugh! And the shriveled-up looks of the little things—how people could like them was more than she knew.

To keep house and bear children—it seemed to

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her that was a combination of Polish kitchen maid and brood mare that might have been tolerated in the dark ages, but not with women where they were to-day. Oh no! Women had rights now. They were no longer chattels—man's property, like a dog or a horse, to be worked and bred. God! what brutes men were, anyway!

She could earn her own living—be as independent as any man. But she wanted to be married. A bachelor girl holding independent ideas was held by men and even women, and mostly by women, in a mild contempt. "Oh, she couldn't get a man," folks explained her views away easily. There was a pride in having a husband as there was a pride in having a Pom dog. To have a husband and to retain still one's independence was the ultimate ambition of the new woman. One showed one had charms as effective as those of the old or degraded woman, who played second fiddle to her husband, and the will and brains and power of a man.

But there was another reason for Sheila to get married. In the atmosphere she lived in, at the office, and outside of the office, the factor of sex in the equation of living was emphasized, exaggerated, twisted to the angle of grotesqueness. In the office they were tremendously "wise." The sleuths of journalism had hounded out the secret pages of the lives of the great and the prominent, and while they never published them for the vulgar, yet they spoke of them without reserve to those free of the mystery of newspaper work. They all knew of the hectic love affairs of a great society leader, but they never discussed her kindly charities. The

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exploits of a great admiral were forgotten, but his love for a little seamstress was giggled over. They knew the "truth about society." A great actress was known to them only by her amours. A candidate for gubernatorial or presidential office might be mentioned:

"Listen, fellows, if I was to tell something about that guy you wouldn't believe it. Why, the dirty dog! Do you know when he was in New Orleans a year ago—"

Literature, to suit a taste trained in this school, had to be strong, gripping, "the facts of life." "Almost Russian" was a term applied to books they liked. They hailed the hundred Gorkys of Grand Street as the hope of American letters.

To Sheila Hopkins and her like, housework might be degrading, the bringing forth of children animallike, ignoble, but sex, in free state, was "human." The works of Mr. Lawrence, the Englishman, were hailed by this adjective. And second to him ran Mr. George Moore. But only one book of Mr. Moore's was read, *The Confessions of a Young Man*, never *The Brook Kerith* by any chance. Never *The Lake*. In the papers advocating birth control you never read an article denouncing lechery.

So through her mind and body the dark element roved. Free, ravaging, with no romance to change it from dross to gold, never to be taken by Mother Nature for her own sweet ends. . . . At times it hit at her like a snarling dog. It took from the glory of the dawn and the moon's majesty. It haunted her like a leering ghost in the broad daylight in the city streets. It giped at her now.

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“Can a woman live without a man?”

She thought of white-haired, sweet-faced, inviolate women of her youth, of resigned old women, of chanting nuns.

“Women do,” she was forced to admit.

A week later she was married to Anthony Sheridan.

CHAPTER XVI

I

IN all his days he had never conceived that time could be so empty, so unprofitable, as it was from half past eight in the morning until half past five in the afternoon—the time his wife was at her work.

They had returned from a brief honeymoon in Atlantic City—that had been Sheila's choice—to two dingy rooms in her boarding house, a bedroom and a sitting room, furnished morosely in the style of the last century, unbeautiful chairs and horsehair sofas, and sweetly sentimental steel prints on the wall. There had been a couple of week-ends at New Canaan, but after two or three of them Sheila tired. The warm Saturday afternoons, the cool Sunday mornings in the country, had no charm for her. She wanted her Saturday afternoons to shop. She wanted on Sundays to go to recitals such as Madame Yvette Guilbert's, whose *Chansons Rouges* and *Les Gants Noirs* her girls' college French followed not at all; or to concerts at the Hippodrome, where fat Italian tenors tra-la-laed for pocket money. These occasions were to her much more important than the silver waves of the Sound or the bluebirds in the apple trees. They denoted culture, and put her on a level above that of the ordinary women in the crowd.

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At Atlantic City and at New Canaan he had made two attempts to keep her at home.

"Sheila dear, please listen to reason. Why do you want to go on working in that dingy office? Interviewing these people you dislike? We don't need the money, God knows."

"We went over that already. It was on condition that I should follow out my career that I consented to marry you."

"I know, pet, but if you want to try your hand at writing, you can do that anywhere. Pen and paper and quiet are all you need. At New Canaan—"

"I know what I'm doing, Anthony"—her voice grew shrill—"I know what's best for myself."

"Sheila honey," he pleaded, "I know it's pretty selfish, but I do wish you'd give that office up. You know down there they'll believe you're supporting me, and it's a bit tough on a man to have folks think that."

"You should have thought of that before you married me." Nothing he could do would shake her from her resolution.

At New Canaan he suggested something that all but brought furies on his head.

"You know, darling"—he held her hand—"there's one thing would make me the happiest of men—the happiest in the world." He led her through the twilight garden to the little stone seat between the yew trees. "If there were a baby of ours, of yours and mine, here, to be a sort of memorial to our caring, to be a living emblem of that—"

She tore her hand away from him.

"Anthony"—her breast heaved—"you must

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never, never mention that. You must never ask that. That would be horrible. Do you know, if I thought that were going to happen me I'd leave you for good. If it did, I'd—I'd jump in the Sound—"

"But, Sheila dear, why? Tell me, for God's sake, why?"

"Take a year away from everything! To be cut off from work, from my career, from interests for a year, perhaps more. To be out of the running. Ugh!"

He said no more. He thought to himself, Let her have her head for a while. She will soon tire of the office and of her ambition. Just wait. Soon she will come round. Soon she herself will want to leave without urging. And so they went back to the city, and she to her work. . . .

"What will I do when you're at the office?"

"Write your poetry, Tony."

But poetry was not written as easily as that. The distillation of ideas into limpid verses was not a quick process. First there would come a thought, and that would have to lie dormant awhile, and then at its appointed time it would explode like a shell, into singing rhythm. And then there would be halts and delays while finding the exact word, the perfect rime. A phrase might take a week to find, a word might take days. He always felt as though an agency outside himself were writing the poem and that he was helping it inefficiently, like an inept secretary. Sometimes the spring would speak through him, sometimes the mysterious, velvety night, sometimes the spiritual divinity of womanhood, sometimes the dead warriors of the

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world. It was a strange and holy psychism, too powerful, too majestic for him to command. He could not sit down in that eight-dollar sitting room and make it do his bidding. No, it was for him to receive it humbly when it deigned to visit him wheresoever he was.

In the country he would have been trudging the flowering lands or the Sound shore, or cutting across to Long Island on his little sloop, or walking, pipe in mouth, through the New England towns he loved. Or busy about the garden. The white force that swept through him at times visited him but little in New York. The inimical suspicious atmosphere of the buyers and sellers seemed to make it hard for the force to visit him. It was easier on the placid water or in the flowering lanes.

But he couldn't go there, at least for a time, until the girl he loved came with him.

She didn't wish him to have lunch with her, or accompany her on any of her assignments. It took her mind from her work, she claimed. So he was left alone until she came home.

He was very lonely for a while, until he found that some of his friends were to be met nearly every hour from even nine o'clock on at the café of a neighboring hotel. They would drop in there for a chat or a drink. They were in the main strugglers in free-lance journalism who never arrived anywhere; artists whose paintings never sold; playwrights whose trunks were full of amateur imitations of dark continental pieces; interior decorators to whom none would intrust a room, much less a house; an occasional poet; not a few women. They

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were all mostly from out of the city, from Wichita Falls; from South Bend, Indiana; from Orange City, Florida. . . .

A battalion of untalented amateurs, whom the meanest professional held in contempt, they had come to New York from every unimportant city in the Union to "make careers for themselves." And gathered together in what was once the noblest part of New York, they took it on themselves to build up a pinchbeck Latin quarter on the Hudson. They were in the main the sons and daughters of prosperous and honest business folk who were surprised at the appearance of a raggedy swan in the ranks of their honest duckling brood, and with the national respect for brains and personality had given their clamoring children an allowance to come to New York, had paid for the couple of years they wanted in which to make good.

But they discovered that what appeared genius in their small town was nothing but the most mediocre of abilities in the Empire City.

If they were not to be artists, at least application could have made of them fairly honest artisans. But they lacked application. Each foregathered with his or her kind, and damned a public that would not accept their tin as platinum. For a year they drank and prattled, were the laughingstock of the artists, the dime museum of the bourgeoisie. Every year a new stock comes, the old disappears.

What becomes of them? God knows. The poets return to Peoria and sell neckties. The artists open delicatessen stores, perhaps, in Canarsie, or in Plainfield, New Jersey. The philosophers get

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a job in a barber shop. The critics address envelopes for a living. What does it matter? We have only a half-hour for the mountebanks. Chuck them a quarter. Hoist them a kick! Good luck! And get to blazes out of here!

II

That he was drinking much more than was good for him, or for any human being, meant nothing more than an amusing characteristic to Sheila. In the circle in which she moved the extravagant consumption of liquor was not frowned on. A man who didn't drink was anathematized as a "kill-joy" and left severely alone.

The old days of newspaper drinking had gone—the drinking that meant a month's furious alcoholism and a while in the hospital to recuperate. The newspaper man of an older day had come straight from the ranks of the people, whose excesses in liquor were curbed by lack of money. The newspaper man of the last generation, when on a spree, went to the corner saloon for his whisky, and got it cheap and plentiful. And paid for its cheapness in suffering.

But a new generation of newspaper writers had arisen, men educated in colleges, from well-to-do homes, and because they were not seen reeling the street or standing in the corner saloon, the public had the impression that these men did not drink.

As a matter of fact they spent as much money on liquor as the former, but they spent it differently. No corner saloon for them. When they drank they did it at a respectable hotel or a cabaret, and

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when they had more than they could stand they went home in a taxicab, and were not a reproach in the public street. They had inhibitions against making spectacles of themselves. But there were few of them who could not drink hard and long.

So to Sheila's mind the idea of a man in liquor was not one of horror. With the rest she had a smile of sympathy for the man who appeared at the office slightly dazed in the morning and pleaded to a "hang-over." "Gee! I had a peach of a bun on last night," and all would feel a vicarious pleasure in the confession.

"I got a head like a tin can this morning."

"Why don't you break away downstairs and get Eddie to fix you up a Tom Collins?"

As a matter of fact Sheila rather felt that hard drinking was one of the concomitants of excellent poetry. Of great poets who had been abstemious she could only recall one, and that was Wordsworth, and outside a few of his lyrics he was tremendously hard reading. Her idea of a poetic personality was the Englishman, Ernest Dowson, who was known to be a superb lush.

She had, too, the rather common belief that a great poet or a novelist or a playwright worked with a bottle of whisky at his elbow, alternating each phrase with a draught of liquor. There were traditions of how the great men worked, of how they were continually in the hospital as a result of alcoholic excesses. "So-and-so can't write a word until he's full to the gills, and then—wow!" This tradition died as hard as the medieval credo that

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hares were hermaphrodite, and that the mandrake shrieked when pulled from the ground.

So long as it did not interfere with her nervous, envious existence, so long as it fitted in with the atmosphere she had chosen for life, she didn't care how much her husband drank. She was married to a poet, and one expected a poet to drink. It didn't interfere with the finances, either. Had it, she would have made it mighty uncomfortable for him. And, moreover, it kept him from fretting after the country.

But she saw little enough of it. He always managed to be presentable when she returned in the evening. A little heavy in the head, a little haggard about the eyes, she didn't mind that. He only looked as a poet should look. He drank his cocktail at the table d'hôte whither they went for dinner, gulped the Chianti, met their friends and drank with them, or went to the theater and drank between the acts. They went home and there was nothing to do until to-morrow.

III

She had left for the office grumblingly a moment or so before, dabbing him a hasty kiss on the cheek and fumbling with her gloves as she trotted down the stairs. He could hear the door slam after her, and in fancy could hear her feet patter on the sidewalk as she turned into Tenth Street, going toward Astor Place Subway. He stood up from his chair and felt his chin.

He was going to work to-day; that he decided.

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In his head for quite a while there had been the idea of an ambitious poem which would make either a long epic or a play in blank verse. The Scandinavians had come to America long before Columbus or Americus had reached the New World, and it was said they had landed and founded a colony in Massachusetts. Out of that a big piece of work could be made, and for a month he had seen them in his mind coming over the troubled Atlantic—the viking galleys cresting the gigantic waves, the helmeted warriors standing in the bow, watching for they knew not what to appear, China perhaps, or the precipitous edge of the world. The rowers rested while the sails were set, and when the breeze went down they stretched their white arms circled with broad silver bracelets, and cut into the mighty waters with their puny oars. A splendid crashing poem was there, the braving of the Maelstrom, the great serpent Bishop Pontoppidan described; the gamboling dolphins, and the eerie note of the gulls; perhaps they should wander into the Sargasso Sea and stay there nine terrible days. Thor would thunder in the storm and the Furies scream in the tempest. He would make the chief some young noble who was fleeing with his bride before the wrath of the king, and who had sworn to go forth and found him an empire or careen over the edge of the world. And in the end he would bring them around Cape Cod into Barnstable, through the bay that was like a gigantic fiord. . . .

There was a tremendous amount of work to be done before pen touched paper. First he would have to hunt down in the Library the legend itself,

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and then he would have to steep himself in Norse literature, until he felt Norse and heroic, reading book after book of sagas. . . .

He had decided to begin on the work to-day and he would start for the great Library at Forty-second Street. He rubbed his chin again, and he looked at his hand. He wouldn't shave with it.

He put his hat on and went out. He'd have one drink and pull himself together, then shave. And, perhaps later, breakfast. He hadn't felt like it in the boarding house. Just a grapefruit and a cup of coffee. Gosh! he'd have to cut this booze thing out. It was no good for a fellow. And, besides, he hated to look at his check book to see what he'd spent yesterday.

He went down the marble steps of the hotel café with an assumption of nonchalance. A couple at the bar turned as he came in.

"Well, look who's here!" They laughed. Anthony had a hazy recollection of having been with them late yesterday afternoon. One was an editor of a cheap sex magazine and the other an artist who made artistic ukuleles for a livelihood. "Little bright-eyes! Where'd you disappear to yesterday afternoon?"

"Oh, I beat it." Tony turned to the smiling bartender. "Make mine a gin fizz." He drank it down.

"You beat it just in time, then," the artist chirruped. "You were all in. Your back teeth were awash."

"Same again, Mike," the editor grinned. "Same again?" he questioned.

"Oh . . ." he hesitated a minute, "all right."

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Now the acrid taste of juniper berries was soothing his scorched palate, and the alcohol drug was running through his veins like morphine, lulling the querulous nerves.

"Well, I got to be going." The editor looked at the clock on the wall. "We go to press to-day."

"Have one before you go," Anthony invited. Such was the merest hospitality. One couldn't take a drink without offering it back.

"Well, I don't mind if I do."

"Same again, Mikel!"

The editor drank his and went. Anthony considered a moment. He turned to the artist. A warm glow was arising in him.

"Had breakfast yet?"

"Cup of coffee," the artist confirmed. "I didn't feel well enough for anything else." He laughed.

"Well, I'll tell you. Have it with me," he invited. "Just wait until I get a shave. I'll be right back." He went off through a side door.

"Some fast little worker." The artist leered at the bartender.

"It's a great life." Mike began clearing up. "He goes at it too strong, though. He comes in in the morning to get a drink to cure the headache. Then it's another. Then he meets somebody. And the first thing you know is he's tanked up for the day. The only thing for a guy like that is to get a little girl who'll take care of him. He's a nice boy." Mike put both hands on the bar. "It ain't right he should become a rummy. But he'll get married some of these days, and he'll have somewhere else to spend his time."

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"He's married," the artist sniggered.

"The hell you say!" Honest Mike was dumfounded. "The hell you say!"

IV

The night was so fair, so young, it seemed, that the house was impossible to Annis, for all its quiet hominess, its mellow candles, its crackling, flaming wood. Ian was in New York and would not be home, for there was an operation to-morrow on a great banker. Spring had come north, a shy, virginal visitor, and its wonder and its glory were so new she could hardly leave it to go asleep. The apple trees were blossoming, and the magnolias were heavy with bloom. The shrill green of springtime was everywhere, on the ground beneath her feet, on the shrubs beside her. The birds were still fussing in the branches, though it was dark, and from the marsh a furlong to the right came the high, somehow friendly treble of the frogs. That was a sound she loved to hear, for she always thought of the frogs as a fussy, sententious people, very swaggering before their wives, very paternal before their children, aloof from humans and yet not unfriendly.

The white ribbon of the road beneath the garden lured her, and with sudden instinct she threw a cloak over her shoulders and slipped down the path. As she opened the wicket gate she heard a pounding lope behind her, and Laertes, the harlequin Great Dame pup, pulled up dignifiedly beside her.

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"Come on, then. Come on, boy!"

A quarter-mile down the road was a preserve of some kind, a hundred acres or more, owned by a New Englander who would not farm or sell it. A long range of bridle paths, with a lake a half-mile long and a hundred yards broad. And here and there were overhanging cliffs, and here and there meadowland. As you went in there was a great stone, round as an egg, and a little bronze plate in it dedicating it to the memory of an Indian chief of the Powhatans. And there was a spring there that bubbled like a boiling pot. Birds were safe there and knew it, and in the daytime the trees were heavy with song. And rabbits burrowed, and hares lay in the long grass. Occasionally foxes barked like dogs in the nighttime, and one could imagine brown Indians slipping lithely through the fir trees or cantering over the meadowlands on hardy brown ponies that could gallop like the wind. Two hundred years ago the place must have been exactly as it was now. . . .

She went up a manner of drive, with the great dog padding beside her, and, crossing a little wooden bridge that creaked, she came to a low cliff that looked over the water.

All day long a great curving wind had been out, shaking the apple trees and rustling the hedges, and with twilight it had gone down. She looked eastward and she saw the thin silver line of the new moon, virginal as spring itself. And there came into her mind a prayer of the Jews she had read somewhere, that they said with the rolling months:

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"Blessed be Thou, O God, who renewest Israel and the moon!"

The fairness of the new moon and the beauty of the evening seemed to her a wonderful augury. For only that morning she had felt what was in her mind and soul develop into a certainty, and she had told Ian. He had wanted some of the country springtime to take with him to New York.

"Come on, Annis," he had urged after breakfast; "let's saddle the Prince and the Pretty Lady, and have a rousing five-mile gallop across the country."

"Ian dear, I don't think I can. I don't think I ought to." She lowered her head and blushed, and her voice was very low. "I don't think I will again for a long time."

He took both her hands in one of his, and raised her head.

"Are you sorry?"

"Ian dear," her eyes had tears in them, but were shining, "you know I'm not. I am dreadfully happy. . . . I have no handkerchief. . . . Are you glad? Tell me, are you very glad?"

"I am glad and proud and happy. . . . Happy for both of us, and very happy for you." . . .

It occurred to her there, sitting by the lake in the faint moonlight with the dog beside her, that only a little while ago, a month, a week, a few days, she would have been afraid to come along this road and into this preserve by herself, even though Laertes were with her. The lonely lake, she could not have gone there. What she feared was not the danger of what might be lurking in the woods, though there was nothing more dangerous there

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than a fox or badger, nor was it fear of some out-cast of the road, hobo or gay cat, but a fear of the battalions of the dead. It was all very well to scoff or laugh. It was all very well to reason mysteriously that even though they existed they could do no harm. "The dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten," wrote Ecclesiastes. "Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion forever in anything that is done under the sun." Oh, but Annis knew better. They had been too often close to her bosom, mewing like cats.

But a night or so ago she would have been afraid. In this preserve and by this lonely lake she might have feared the army of the Indian dead, brown-skinned, sinister, inexorable; they had no liking for the blond races which had wiped them from the earth as a nation and made their little remnant a drunken reproach. Their hatred would blow on her like a polar wind, and they would stand between her and the gate homeward, and every step would be an agony of fear. And worse than these was the roving band of the air, that made dogs howl at night and birds restless in their nests, and started the clamor of the wild geese. . . .

But not now! She was inviolate. No evil spirit could jostle the hem of her garment. No charm of the Key of Solomon could harm her. Beneath her heart a curling shadow lay, and on her brow was a light invisible. And on each side of her strode Michael and Raphael, their broadswords bared. . . .

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How much this meant to her. The two years of her marriage had been a long waiting for this son or daughter. And as the months passed by, a great fear had set in her heart that she would never have a child, and, not so much for her own sake as for Ian's, she had been bitterly disappointed. It always seemed to her that a barren marriage was a great reproach to a man. He was either to be pitied as a cripple is to be pitied or condemned as one condemns the selfish, the coward, the miserly. And she would rather die than have her husband pitied or scorned.

She loved him and he loved her and she feared for that, for love each other no matter how much a couple did, yet a day would inevitably arrive when romance would be dumb and passion, that flying hunter, would have become a mannered hack. As one grew older, one grew more silent, more dignified, heart no longer speaking to heart, irrespective of convention. And the two who had been great lovers would find themselves, did they but analyze it, no more than fast friends. A woman's arms, a woman's kiss, she knew, would not keep love eternally young. There was needed, too, a baby's laughter.

And with each child there would be new interests, new bonds, new humanity. And love would flourish like the green bay tree.

Around her heart there crept a warmth like the glow of a kindly fire. Which would it be, a boy or a girl? If it were a boy, she wanted him like his father, proud, upstanding, intolerant of pettiness, arrogant toward the strong, and gentle toward the

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weak and the poor. And if it should be a girl, she didn't care whether it should be beautiful or no, but only wanted her to be very gentle and kindly, so when she grew woman-old, and entered a room, there would flow from her such sweetness as would make all hearts sing.

And the baby would have what she had never had—kindness and protection. And as she thought of the tragedies of her childhood, her mouth took that piteous quiver to the left, and her eyes dimmed, and the lump that always rose in her throat rose there now, even though she was a woman now, and wife and mother. The beatings, the sordid, mumming life; the poor little innocent things she had wanted and had never received; the thoughts of flight, of suicide; the dreadful shame before other children. Oh no! not for her baby. It should have everything that would make life strong and sweet and fine.

It seemed to her, as she stood there, that the hearts of all women were open to her, and she could see the pure and glowing ruby that was in everyone, even though it were covered with selfishness or muddied over with the sordidness of life. And for the first time she understood Mary of the Romanists, blessed among women, and saw that she was not a figment of an old-time worship of Ashtoreth of the Canaanites, as claimed the scientists, nor a painted goddess of wood to be worshiped, but the prototype of all women who love and are loved. Conception had been vulgarized into a miracle, as her Son Christ Jesus of Judea had been vulgarized into a thaumaturgic god. He who

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had been carpenter and poet and teacher and the friend of the poor! The Conception had been immaculate, but it had been immaculate because spirit had called to spirit through the medium of flesh, not flesh to flesh alone. And out of such unions as this are not great men born?

The Great Dane awoke her from her reverie by thrusting his nose into her palm, and he plucked at her cloak to signal it was time he brought her back. The new moon was going down, and in a little while would be the quiet darkness of the wood. She watched it touch the feathery treetops, and turned to go.

"Blessed be Thou, O God, who renewest Israel and the moon."

CHAPTER XVII

I

AT first it had not bothered him any, but now Tony Sheridan felt that the liquor he was drinking was beginning to get a hold on him, beginning to be his master. There was no inclination to work now, he had to flog himself to it, and if it weren't a matter of self-respect he would have written nothing at all. As it was, all he accomplished were facile lyrics, suitable only for the cheaper magazines, to be used as fillers at the bottom of a page of an improper story. Even then he would not have written were it not for some feeling within him that it was not right his wife should work and he do nothing. But vanished like smoke were the epics he would write, like "The Wandering of the Norse" and a play about "Paul Jones."

The summer had changed him. He had grown overweight and flabby, and his eyes were bloodshot and his skin of a pallid unhealthiness. It was all he could do not to show the trembling of his hands. And that frightened him. Latterly he had decided to give up drinking and he would moon away a day of all but agony. The second day he would find he had nowhere to go to meet friends in the lonely city but a bar, and he would go there to see them, deciding he would drink nothing but ginger ale,

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but after three or four of these he tired, and he somehow could get up no enthusiasm for conversation on mineral waters. Moreover, his friends somehow resented his refusal to drink.

"What are you drinking that stuff for? For Heaven's sake get sense!"

"I thought I'd lay off the stuff for a day or two."

"Then why in blazes don't you go to a soda fountain? Ah, come on, Tony, have a cocktail. Don't be a kill-joy!"

He wanted a cocktail badly himself, so he seized the excuse.

"Well, I don't want to be a kill-joy—"

"That's the boy, Tony!"

"Bring me an old-fashioned cocktail!"

"Now you're talking!"

Then a few drinks and everything seemed all right. Forgotten were the fears of drink getting hold on him. Blazes! One could quit any time. After all, what was more pleasant than to sit down with a couple of friends over a glass or two and pass away the time!

But the morning would come. And with it tremors and nausea. And when his wife had hustled to the office he would arise and, with lingering steps, like a surly dog obeying his master, he would stroll to his favorite bar. The bartender would be ready for him with a subtle, sympathetic smile.

"Well, how 're you feeling this morning?"

"Oh, rotten, Sam!"

The bartender would shake his head as though he knew what it meant.

"Better try something for it. A gin fizz? Tom

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Collins?" Every morning he went through this ritual.

Tony shook his head. Now they didn't sound good to him.

"Wait, I'll fix you something up," Sam would suggest. There would be the tinkle of chipped ice in a glass, and the muffled crash of the cocktail shaker. He would push over a murky green liquid in a whisky glass.

"Try that and you'll feel better."

And Tony would sip the licorice-tasting absinthe, and his jostled nerves would begin to co-ordinate.

"How's that?" Sam would ask.

"Fine!" A moment's hesitation. "I don't suppose another would do any harm."

"Well, don't take too many of them, or you'll find yourself on your ear," and the prescription would be repeated.

There were always a little group in the bar of an early morning, having their one or two bracers to begin the day—a real-estate man from across the street; a playwright of national reputation; a man called "the doctor," a lean gray man never without his overcoat and muffler; an Italian American, who kept a wine store up the street. All knew one another, and greeted one another gruffly in the morning and boisterously in the afternoon. The real-estate man was the only one besides Tony who depended on absinthe, instead of straight whisky, for his morning's "snifter." He was pleasant after even the most riotous night before. One morning the bartender looked at his depleted absinthe supply.

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"Very little of the stuff left, gents."

"What 'll us rummies do when that's gone?" the real-estate man asked Tony.

"Us rummies!" The phrase struck Tony with a chill like cold water. Was he already in the class of addicts, hailed as brother by the poor degraded slaves to whom whisky was the only thing in the world? Had he come already so far? "Us rummies!"

But he got his couple of frappés down and suitable drinks to follow them. And the world grew bright again, and fear left him. And the degraded shame-faced addicts became once more the merry, witty company which alcohol prinks them up to be. The real-estate man was no longer a lodge brother of poisonous rites, but a "good scout"; and his words were not a hailing of doom, but a phrase of joyous banter—"Us rummies!"

II

Though Sheila boasted she was an independent woman, and took great credit to herself for paying for her own lunches, it was Anthony's hand that paid for their board and lodging, their breakfasts. When she wanted dresses, a hat, or shoes, occasionally she paid for them herself and considered herself modern. It made her feel she was economically free.

"How can a woman feel she is free when a man pays for everything she wears and owns?" Marriages in which the husband paid for everything she characterized as prostitution, after the brutal word-

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ing of her kind. Her own money she saved, paying it into a savings account. After all, you could never tell! It was just as well to have your own money. If your husband ever began to behave badly, it was an anchor to windward. It was a lifeboat in which you could put away from the sinking ship.

Of course there was no particular reason to save, because Anthony would do anything she wanted him to do. He really was a dear boy, and it was so nice of him to have given up the idea of the country. And he had money. This income of nearly twenty-five hundred dollars would suffice to keep them both. And when his aunt Eugenie died there would be twice as much more, and the little house in New Canaan would be theirs for good, and Tony could sell it for quite a figure. Real estate was always going up.

This income of twenty-five hundred was derived from the wise investments of his forbears. Queer little newfangled ideas of a foregone age which had developed into the commonplaces and necessities of everyday life—street railroads, electric lighting companies, stocks that paid dividends of sometimes as much as twenty-five per cent. And there was not only Aunt Eugenie; there were other Sheridans scattered here and there, whose every death meant a little or big windfall for Tony, and of course to her.

There was never any talk of money between them, so she knew nothing of his finances. She took it for granted that his drinking cost only the residue of his income when their board bill

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was paid. The folk she knew at her office were careful as to the spending of their money in this connection. If they paid for another man's drink, it was with the understanding he give another drink in exchange. She never conceived that her husband, when he had taken a certain amount, would treat all hands at a bar with foolish generosity, that he was a mark for every grafter and parasite such as make the saloon their peculiar hunting ground. She never saw what was going on in his mind when he frowned in the morning, thinking perhaps he was puzzling over some intricate lyrical phrase. As a matter of fact he was wondering where the twenty or fifty or hundred he had yesterday had disappeared to, and was this handful of crumpled bills all that remained to him out of what he had cashed yesterday morning? Could he have given that fellow who had asked for the loan of five dollars a fifty-dollar bill in mistake? Good Lord! he must have.

It came very soon that he had to go to his bank and draw from safe deposit some of his securities. He offered them for sale to the bank, which took them at a fair and reasonable price. But the shrewd eyes of the bank men, he imagined, were delving into his inmost consciousness. He could hear them saying: "There's this fool poet, off to the poorhouse, and serve him right. Well, a fool and his money's easily parted. Look at his eyes. He's drinking, that's what he is. A tank, like all of his kind."

Probably they were saying nothing of the kind. Behind their steely masks, which are as much of a

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make-up as an actor's cream and rouge, these cold-eyed bank men may have a leaning toward art and a respect for a poet. But Sheridan was tremendously sensitive.

So that when he wanted money again, he brought his securities to sell to one of his saloon acquaintances, a broker who affected the Holland House. And after many cocktails they got to business, and Tony took what was given, which may have been right, but was probably wrong. The transactions were repeated at frequent intervals, until now, when he stared his little fortune in the face, it was with a sense of fear. Whither had half of it gone so shortly? Even were Sheila to change her mind and come to live in the country, there would not be enough. But there was his aunt Eugenie, who had been more than a mother to him, and who was breaking her heart because things were not right with him. If he could only get matters fixed, she would be glad to put him on his feet again. That was all she lived for, dear Aunt Eugenie, to give and serve!

III

Gray-haired, with little shadows around her eyes, fifty-five if a day, and with a body yet trim and sweet as an apple, with brown eyes that searched you and with a profile that had the beauty of a white bog flower, Eugenie Adams seemed to be patiently waiting.

This immortality of the soul, that we worry about so much, would be more patent if there were more Eugenie Adamses for us to know and see.

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We argue to ourselves with halting logic, that after death we live. Just a little natural process, not more mysterious than sleep, and we wake again to friends and lovers and laughter and the call of good work to be done. And then something disturbs us, the bulge of muscle beneath a coat sleeve, the curve of a woman's waist, a coarse word, a mean action, a sordidness in a man's eyes, a scientist's prating of baboons and fishes, and again we disbelieve. A little love, a little laughter, a fluttering kiss at twilight, the sweet cry of the hounds and the rise of a horse to the jump, and then gray hairs and aching bones and eyelids that droop over the fire. And then we are gone and forgotten. And women dance, and the horses run races, and the hounds give tongue on a frosty morning. And we deader than Death! A bad bargain, kinsmen! A damned poor bargain!

But to look at Eugenie Adams was to have all doubts vanish like an early mist. There stands an immortal soul, because we see it, exactly as there is a moon because it confronts our eyes. A day will come, we know, when that covering will divide and her place will be among the stars forever.

She comes into this history but little, fluttering around a page or two, alighting for an instant and going away again. Some day another author will tell her story, and there will be great romance to it, and beautiful writing. . . . Long years ago, in her early twenties, she had disappeared for five years, running away with a man. She had gone away a sweet, laughing girl, eager for life. She had come back a sweet, dignified woman, silent, waiting

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for something. The common good of existence she accepted smilingly, but she seemed an immensity above it. What her history in those five years was none but Anthony's mother knew. Had she been married? If not there was no sin to it, for sin had left no trace on her gentle, white, confident spirit. I take it that her lover died, and that she was waiting to join him, knowing that the years of waiting were as nothing compared to eternal time. . . .

When Anthony's mother died she became a sort of mother, sister, sweetheart to him, ever about him like a white dove in the gloaming, sharing his triumphs in a happy silence, easing his difficulties with a sparing, gentle word. Their life together seemed to be a continual sitting in the twilight among the apple trees, with the quiet of Christ about, while he talked sparingly and read her what he had written, and she looked at him with her brown eyes clouded and her white hands resting in her lap like a closed flower.

And when he had married she had loosed him with a murmured prayer:

"The Lord bless thee and keep thee, Anthony. The Lord make His face to shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee. The Lord turn His face to thee and grant thee peace. The Lord is thy guardian; the Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. For length of days and years of life and peace shall this add to thee. The Lord guard thee from all evil. He shall guard thy soul."

She knew now he was very unhappy, but what could she do? Her heart felt it was aching for her

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sister's child, who was something very much of a child of her own, but she felt also that the strange bond that was between two people was a thing that a third person, no matter how intimate, could not meddle with and have any measure of success. Sometimes it was delicate and glistening as a cob-web, and other times it was like a steel cable, and this cable was straight sometimes, and sometimes snarled. At all events a third person couldn't help except in material things. This she occultly knew. If her boy wanted any advice, any help, any comfort, she was ready and eager, but until he asked for it nothing could be said. They looked at each other with a sort of dumb agony, but his words were easy and flippant, and her words none at all. Only her lips moved:

"The Lord shall guard thee from all evil. He shall guard thy soul!"

But times are changed since the age of the Hebrew pastorals. Gone are Baal and Moloch, and Isis and Osiris of the Egyptians, and the gods of Phœnicia, and the gods of Rome and Greece; but to-day, stronger than they, the sons of Prometheus storm the ramparts of heaven, and the Lord has little time to tend His well-beloved. He must fling them into the welter of battle, to fight, to win or fall.

CHAPTER XVIII

I

FIRST of all, his brains, his whole being, would be heavy, dull, gray like a rainy day. Then give him two or three drinks and he would be what he had been before he had come to New York and married Sheila, his wife. Everything in life would be welcome to him, all existence good. There would be again the gently brooding eye, the kindly smile—with this difference, that there was in everything he thought or did the high note of hysteria. And once more would come the vision to him of what he was born to and the work that the Lord had put to his hand.

Across the humid bar, through the chatter of the drinkers, there would come again the vision of the sunlit Connecticut garden, the restful green of the grass, the irregular symmetry of the branches of the apple tree, the moss like a slow tide rising on the sundial, the staccato rhythm of the woodpecker, the twit and chirrup of the other birds, the microscopic bourdon of the bees. The wind would come through the garden with a pleasant sough, and the flowers would waver and undulate like dancing girls.

And in the old house that was built when Indians still roamed New England there would be wisdom

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and beauty; his aunt Eugenie with the very gentle face and the kindly shadows round her eyes, and his wife Sheila, beautiful as Sandra, whom Botticelli painted and loved. The grim hardness that the battle of the world had put there would melt like ice in the sunshine of that life, and her brow would smooth like an opening flower.

Round about the garden there would be the intense, enchanted life of the children—for the children would be there, sons or daughters, it mattered not which, with their laughter like the murmur of pigeons, the funny little facile tears, like the rain of April. A girl would be dark-haired, like the daughter of Franz Stuck whom the Austrian had painted. A boy would be fair, like the golden-headed *bambini* of the Italian painters. But they would be there.

And life would not be complex and ugly, but simple and very beautiful; not that he wanted to shirk life, but that he felt that in that atmosphere like a heather-scented dell, his messages could come to him. His was the gift to see the glory of the mornings, the sparkling wine of summer days, the hushed twilight, when peace dripped like honey from a comb. These he would distill into wine, and give like a refreshing draught to the battle-hacked fighters of life: "Come, the day is done, and put fighting away until to-morrow. In the meantime the moon is coming up, the woods are full of mystery. There a ship puts out to sea. In the nighttime the mushrooms grow and dew falls upon the grass. Listen, I want to tell you of the trees..."

And so in his mind there would rise the fabric of

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poem and story—there were so many to put in chiming rimes. Now it was the birds setting south when the winter of ice came. Now it was the love of the Norse sea wanderers, now it was the epic of the bees. A strange queendom he wished to write about—a golden folk, the interior of whose yellow houses was a pinnacle of architecture to which Tawak who builded the great wall of China, could not arise, nor Cheops of the pyramids, nor the Goban Saor. Their work was of a great beauty, translating the perfume of flowers into beeswax and honey. They were industrious and cruel and very mysterious. Very sensitive to women they were; they could not abide an unchaste one to come near them or their home. In Ireland when a person of the house died, the bees had to be told, else they would go away. “*A bheachogai, ta fear an tighe seo marbh.*” “O bees, the man of the house is dead.”

Oh, the things there were to write about, that would never be written about, until he went out home to the garden of the bees!

He sat in the chattering barroom, and the vision faded out in soft tendrils of blue and gold, and there arose in its place the fact, the cold and ugly fact, that he could not go on with this life much longer. If he did, he was somehow doomed. That he felt.

Drink is as personal a thing as love; on each man it has a particular, differentiated effect. Some men it kills, some it does no harm to. Some it gets in the brain, and some in the nerves, and some in the particular organs of the body. Subtle, of infinite cruelty, of terrific power, those it wishes to slay give it the chance, and it slays. Its marked

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men may laugh, and protest, as they do—a trifle overmuch; they may snarl and clamor against attack, but at the elbow of each is the dreadful familiar whose behest they must obey, doing his work, which is the blurring of the sunshine of heaven. Each knows, knows. . . .

And Anthony Sheridan knew. Already he could feel the remorseless fingers clutching him, making him open his throat. Already was there a feeling as of maggots in his brain. Some men it attacks quickly, some slowly, according to their temperament and strength and its opportunity. And Anthony was of those who succumb rapidly.

Only one place was sanctuary from its slow, encircling attack. Only one place could he be free to become whole again, and that was in the sunlit garden of the bees, where healing welled up from the friendly earth, as from the waters of Bethesda Pool.

II

It was Saturday night and they had come in from the theater. All day and night he had been morose, now depressed, now exultant with hope. He walked about the little sitting room nervously. His wife watched him with a smile.

"I suppose you want to say good night to your friends," she suggested. "Well, run on. You've been a very good boy for the last few days. Only don't take too much."

Instead of the usual rather shamefaced grin with which he received this, he shook his head. His face was stern. He sat down.

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"Sheila"—he caught his lips with his fingers—"I'm afraid I'm hitting it up a little too much."

"Well, don't do it so much, then."

"Sheila, if I were to tell you"—he hesitated an instant—"that the—the thing—is—getting—a grip on me—"

"Well, give it up entirely, why don't you?" Her tone was slightly impatient, as though the subject didn't interest her much. It was entirely his business, nothing common to both of them, so she didn't care a terrible lot.

"I don't think you quite understand," he pursued. "It's not easy. As a matter of fact, it's very hard, just as I'm situated. Sheila dear," his voice broke, "I'm in trouble. Will you help me?"

"Tony, what do you mean? How? Trouble?" Her voice grew hard. The first thought that sprang into her head was that he was mixed up in some intrigue with a woman. "What trouble?"

"I mean—this drink. It's a big trouble, surely. I just got—into it. It's easy enough. You don't quite understand, but I'll try and put it clear for you. A girl in New York who has nobody, and gets lonely, goes to a dance hall, and sooner or later she gets mixed up too deeply with a man. A man, lonely here, goes to a saloon, and sooner or later he gets mixed up—with a demon."

"Oh, pshaw!" She laughed. "What are you trying to do? Practice literature on me?"

"No, Sheila. I'm in earnest, and God knows I'm in trouble."

"Well, stop drinking, then." Her voice was petulant.

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"It's not easy. It's easy to say stop. But it's far from easy to do. You don't know how far into it I've gone. Once or twice I've been—near seeing things. It's been to a great extent secret from you—You see, I'm confessing things."

"Oh, you're exaggerating. You just imagine it."

"No, Sheila." He was emphatic. "And it's very hard to do as you say. You see, I'm out of hand a bit. I want to get a grip on myself. You could help me so easily, if you only would."

"What do you want me to do?"

"Would you come out to New Canaan for a while? I'll make it very happy for you there. Oh, honey, you've never given it a trial. Just try for my sake. Do just this one thing for me. I wouldn't ask you, except that it's—vital—to me. I—"

"No! and no! and no!" Her tone cracked like a whip.

"No?" He seemed dazed.

"When everything else failed," her voice sneered, "you try to prevail on my pity to help you in your plans to bury me alive in some country village. Even if it were true, are you selfish enough to want me to give up my career to go and nurse you just because you've been foolish and depraved enough to get yourself in this state with booze? Honestly, are you? If you knew the contempt I've got for you!" She was fast losing control of herself. Only the conventions of the boarding house prevented her from raising her voice to a shrill shriek. "Aren't you ashamed of yourself to ask me for such a thing, even if it were true, which it isn't. It's only imagination!"

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He picked up his hat.

"I think I'll drop out for a few minutes." His voice was casual again. "I sort of promised—"

"There you go again," she sneered. "You can't even make an effort."

He looked at her. "I've made my effort." He smiled.

"Haven't you a spark of manliness left in you?"

"I mayn't be back," he said hurriedly. "So don't worry."

"Worry? I shouldn't worry if you never came back."

He got out quickly. He felt he couldn't stop in that room any longer. It had taken in him a lot of courage to bare the sore that was hurting him and needed healing, and that he was rather ashamed of. All it had received was a kick and derision, and the sharp cracklings of a whip on it. If he had stayed with her one minute longer he felt he would have gone mad. As it was, his throat was aching horribly and he felt terribly near the verge of tears. If anyone had spoken kindly to him at that moment he would have broken down.

But none spoke kindly to him. The only sound in his ears as he opened the front door was the cynical cutting laughter of his wife upstairs, carefully muted—so as not to offend the conventions of what was home to her, the drab boarding house.

III

All those places that Tony Sheridan used to frequent are closed now. The windows that once

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were bright and seductive are cobwebbed and grimy. The shiny letters in the window are now an obscene gray. The swinging leaf doors are rusty on their astonished hinges. Within is a jungle of rats.

Gone are the broken-arched, flabby-fingered bartenders with the empty sympathy, the false jollity, the wiles as sordid and as patent as any woman of the streets! They who were so "wise," so full of experience, so certain of everything, and couldn't foresee their end! Gone are the burly owners—Mike Murphy and Thomas Mayer and Irving Kahn, "the honest Kike," and Billy this and Tony that and Al something else! They who were so hail-fell-well-met with the customer with the lined pockets, and so short to and contemptuous of the bum, him who was their own handiwork. They who used to enter so importantly after having paid fifty dollars to a grafting cop, or bartered the influence of the saloon, no mean thing, either, to some peanut politician, or bailed out some customer for breaking the law, when they were certain of having the money repaid. These were your kings, Second and Third and Sixth and Seventh Avenues! Where are they now?

They are gone, and gone with them are the parasites who cadged drinks and the fools who paid for them. Gone are the drunks who wanted to fight, and the drunks who wept, and the drunks who were abominably ill. Gone are the pimps of the back room and the women who supported them. Gone are the telephones over which bets were made on horses that the bettor never saw, and on fights

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which were fixed before the men entered the ring. Gone is the fetid lunch at the end of the bar, where the bloated flies buzzed. Gone are the oleographs of the languid, steatopygous nudes. Gone the brass rail! Gone the sawdust! Gone the lavish spittoons.

And this was your shrine, Bacchus, these fetid, sinister dives. To this had your cult come, son of Zeus and Semele. You who were worshiped on Mount Cithæron, and for whom the poets of Attica dipped into their treasure of words, how do you like being a divinity in the slums of New York? And even that has gone. Torn is your ivy and withered your vine leaves; your thyrsus is warped and broken, and your panther, what of him? A lean and starving alley cat!

And yet it will all rise again, they say—the miracle of the phoenix!

Aye! A frog claimed that if some one would lift him to a tree top, goes the Gadhlig old-word, he could see Brazil. . . .

IV

It was twenty minutes to closing time and the bar was full when Tony came in. He edged his way to the end.

“Shot of Old Crow? I got you, Cap. And a little ginger ale? Here it is.”

A regular Babel swirled about the bar. From Fifth Avenue, from around Washington Square, from Sixth, where they were, from Seventh, from Eighth, had come the toilers who wished to spend a percentage of their week's wages; the others to spend what money they had. Three men worked

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like demons behind the bar. Sam, the regular, found time to touch the poet on the arm.

"How's everything?"

"Pretty rotten."

"Ah, that's too bad! Go easy on that Old Crow stuff. Come on, let me change it to a highball. Trouble? No trouble for you." It was well worth while to be genial and paternal to a customer who was worth ten dollars a day or more to the house, and who wasn't careful about his change when he had had a drop too much.

Tony finished the drink and pushed the glass forward.

"That's right, son. Forget your troubles. Hell! there's nothing in the world worth worrying about."

He drank his second moodily. Sam hurried to fulfill an order farther down the bar.

"Three darks, one light, and a small Scotch."

A group near the door raised their voices loudly. Someone of their number had taken umbrage at a remark of another, and the rest were trying to pacify him. "Oh, for God's sake, cut it out!" "Ah, come on, shake hands." "That guy's always trying to start somethin'!" "Ah, come on, life's too short—"

"A little quiet, gentlemen, please, a little quiet." The owner moved toward the group with burly bonhomie. Behind him unobtrusively hovered the bulk of the chucker-out, a fifth-rate pugilist. Diplomacy forever!

"I hate that kind of rough stuff," Sam complained. He moved Tony's glass away, and wiped the counter. "It makes people leery of the place. Are you feeling better now?"

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"Thank you, Sam. I'll repeat the dose."

"When you're feeling blue, there's nothing like a li'l' party." The siphon sizzed into the glass. "That's good stuff, that Old Crow."

He left Tony to say good-by to a group of new customers. They looked prosperous, so he wanted them back.

"A li'l' drink on the house before you go, gents. A drop of Scotch? A li'l' rye? Glass of beer? Have a cigar? . . . Come again; always glad to see you!"

Down the bar a man had knocked over another's glass and one of the rituals of the saloon was in progress. The guilty one was mopping up the other's coat with his handkerchief, apologizing profusely. "No offense meant!" went the formula.

"No offense taken!"

"Maybe you wouldn't mind having a li'l' drink on me, seeing as how . . ."

"Well, I don't mind. . . ."

"Mr. Sheridan, I want you to meet a couple of friends of mine, good fellows." Sam introduced a couple of strangers, one florid and corpulent, one lean and sallow. "Mr. Bulger, Mr. Kellogg. Mr. Sheridan's a poet."

"A poet, hey?"

"Sure. You must have seen his name in the papers."

"Oh, sure, we seen his name."

"You ain't the guy—pardon me, I mean the writer—" the sallow rumhound suggested, "what wrote 'The Lady That's Known as Lou'?"

"No! no!"

"A bunch of the boys," he quoted, "was whoop-

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ing it up in some saloon or other, and with them a guy called Dangerous Dan MacHugh! I thought maybe it was you wrote that!"

"Why, you poor fish!" his friend remonstrated, "it was that guy Kipling writ that."

"No, now that I remember, it was Robert W. Chambers wrote it, I'm sure. What's your pleasure, Mr. Marden."

"You guys talking about po'try?" somebody horned in on the offchance of a free drink. "Say, fellows, le' me tell you so' thin'. They's a guy on the *Evening Sun*, one of them colyumists, and when it comes to po'try, sucker, he's a ring-tailed buzzard. He's a pippin, I tell you. He's a lulu bird. He's deep, that's what he is. He writ so'thin'—"

"Aw, is that so?" The burly one was supercilious. "Le' me tell *you* somethin', brother. They's a guy in this writing business, his name is Wright. Get that? Harold Bell Wright. And he sure swings a wicked pen. He shows 'em up I'll tell the world. Boy, he's an artist!"

"Aw, is that so?"

"Yeh, fellow. That's so! My wife is quite a lit'ry woman—her and you'd get on fine together, Mr. Kerrigan—"

"Time's up, gents. Closing up."

"Pleased to have met you, Mr. Marden," the sallow one took ceremonious leave. "Hope to see you again."

"Glad to have made your acquaintance, indeed, I'm sure." The burly one was not to be outdone.

"Where you off to?" The owner intercepted Tony at the door. "Come on upstairs. There's

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some of your friends coming up. We'll have a few drinks up there. Hey, what do you say? Tomorrow's Sunday."

"I ought to go home."

"Aw, home was never like this."

No! that was true! Neither the sweet house in Connecticut of the apple trees, nor the dingy room a block away where contention dwelt like a polar wind.

"Aw, come on! Forget your troubles!"

"All right."

"All out, gentlemen, please. Outside, please. All out!"

CHAPTER XIX

I

FOR days he had been seeing himself as he really was, a man whose will was crippled. At times it would occur to him that he was just merely an object of contempt, his manliness gone, a man with a failing. And then again he would see clearly that he was just an unfortunate caught in a morass, without strength enough to leave it. He mustn't have been born with a terrible amount of it, he judged. Perhaps he was. Perhaps he wasn't. At any rate, what he was born with was what God had given him. And it was wrong to condemn him, as it was wrong to condemn any of God's crippled creatures.

What he needed was to get away from this and what he needed was a little help. A little kindliness, a little love, fresh dawns, and a clean air. Against the power of big love the demon was powerless, and in the sunshine and fresh air he wilted and died.

It was easy to arise and go from the city, some whither away, where this street, and that corner and yonder hotel would not remind him of folly and degradation. But when the ghosts would beckon and smile their macabre alluring smile, he would need some one with very gentle eyes, with gentle hands.

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There was his aunt Eugenie!

Ah, but he hadn't the right to call on her, he felt. She would have gone with him to the ends of the earth, he knew. But, after all, he felt in a queer way, it would be a disloyalty to his wife to go off that way, to sever all spiritual connection between them.

What would most men do under the circumstances?

Perhaps most men wouldn't bother to quit drinking, but if they did, and if their wives refused to help them, to go away with them until they had fought the trouble down, they would go off themselves, and when they were whole again, clear-eyed, clear-couraged, they would remember, and they who had refused to help them would be no more to them than the merest stranger whom one detested for a patent fault.

Ah, but there were few women who would refuse to help a man when he was down and out. A queer maternal something in them stirred for the under dog. But there was nothing maternal in Sheila. There was nothing that was admirable.

And yet he loved that girl! And love of her had brought him to where he was to-day.

In all his life he had loved but one woman. In the days before he had met her he loved her. He loved her in day dreams. He brought to marriage more than a man usually brings—dreams and hopes and splendid delicacy, more the treasure of a young girl. He had given it so fully, too. And here he was to-day.

And he loved her still.

In spite of coldness, in spite of contention, in

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spite of her selfishness, he loved her. He was forever making excuses for her. "She is tired," he would say when she was bitter after a day in the office and was pouring on his head the gall she would have liked to pour on her associates but dared not. "Poor girl, let her try, and I hope she may not be too disappointed when eventually the truth comes home to her," he would think when she would talk of making a career with her meager talents. Another man would have lost patience: "Why, confound you! you can't write, you can't think, you can't feel except the petty intensive emotion of your own dwarfed and shriveled being. Quit this fooling and bragging. Either get down to your dishes or get out!" But he was too sensitive himself to hurt another human being, and, besides, he had not the masterfulness. He was not one of the captains who take cities, or the writers who move nations. He was just a boy with a gift of verse, singing as the blackbird sings.

He thought to himself, "If she were dead now, or if I had never met her, would I be drinking here, wasting away my years, my poor gifts, and the life God gave me?" And very clearly and definitely the answer came: No! Drink was not a pleasant thing to him. He didn't enjoy it. It was just a method of escape into a country of hysterical merriment and comradeship from a reality of blasted ideals and thwarted hopes. If it weren't that some dreadful destiny had tied him to her, he would flee from this as from a plague. For he was afraid of it, mortally afraid. Only last week a doctor whom he had secretly consulted had told him as much. "If you

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don't get away from this, my lad, in three months, in six at most, you'll be in the gutter."

"I can't get away just now."

"You've got to."

"There are ties."

"Break them."

That was more easily said than done.

II

He felt, he knew, that his destiny hung in the balance the moment he faced his wife across the sitting-room table. In a few minutes they would go out to dinner. But he had been screwing up his courage all day to tell her what he had to.

"I want to say something, Sheila."

"Well, hurry up then. I'm hungry. Please remember I've been working all day, while you've been flitting around."

"Sheila, I'm gone," his voice was short, staccato. "Do you understand me? I'm just broken. I'm through."

"Oh, you imagine things. Let's get on to dinner."

"No, we won't." His hands were shutting and closing involuntarily. "I'm gone, do you understand me? I'm broken up. I'm on my last foot or so."

"Oh, well, if you say so, you are," she enunciated, with mock patience. "Well, what do you want me to do about it?"

"Well—well, you see, I've just got to get away from the city and away from this damned life. Your going out in the morning and my waiting

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until you come home. Christ Jesus! It's killed me, that's what it has!"

"The same old story! Back to the country. Well, go!"

"You won't come with me?"

"I will not." She laughed definitely.

"Sheila, I'm serious, deadly serious. Are you going to talk about your career now, when it's a question of my living or dying in degradation."

"In the first place, there's no question of your dying in degradation. You're imagining things."

"Because you don't know. Because I've cared too damned much to let you know. Do you know that in certain places I can't get a drink any more?" The words came ripping from his lips in swift, minute explosions. "Because even in their slack and lazy code I've been too drunk. Do you know there are hotels I can't go into any more. Those nights I stayed away from home, do you know why it was? Because I was in no fit state to come home. I've tried to spare you and I have done it. But I know where I am now, and I'm down and I'm out."

"Well, if you're down and out," she flared at him, "I'm not. And if your work has gone to pieces, mine hasn't. Why should a woman in these days give up her career and become a nurse to her husband?"

"Your career!" he sneered. "A husband! Am I a husband? I'm asking you, am I a husband? Why, damn you, if you were rich and I were poor all I'd be is your kept man. God's curse on you!" he sobbed, "you don't want a husband, you don't

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want a home, all you want is a kept man. And by Jesus! I'm he!"

"That's the booze that's talking." She took it easily. "That's not you."

"For the first time in my life it's I talking." He calmed down suddenly, pulling himself in with a vicious twist. "You said, go! Well, I'll go. Only let us get this wretched farce finished. Listen." His throat went dry and cracked. "Will you give me a divorce?"

"A divorce?" She looked at him surprisedly.

"Will you give me a divorce?"

"Why should I give you a divorce? Don't be ridiculous!"

"Listen to me, Sheila. Will you give me a divorce?"

"I will not. Go and sleep it off," she laughed. "To-morrow you'll be crawling."

He picked his hat up and went to the door. He opened it.

"Will you either come away with me and give up this work of yours, or will you set me free to go my own way?"

"Tony, I will do neither one nor the other."

There was a half-checked sob. Then the door slammed.

A divorce? She laughed to herself.

A divorce? She hesitated a moment.

Well, anyway she would have to go out to dinner by herself. She looked around for something to read at the table. A small green volume entitled *Ancient Hebrew Literature* came to her hand. She opened it tentatively.

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A continual dropping on a very rainy day and a contentious woman are alike.

Whoever hideth her hideth the wind. . . .

"Oh, it's the Bible," she thought, and she threw it away. She picked up a cheap sex magazine.

"But what about a contentious man?" she asked.

"A divorce?" Her mind played around the thought. After all, it mightn't be so bad. There would be alimony, of course. And why shouldn't there be? Had he not taken the best years of her life, her love, her virginity. Oh no! He couldn't throw her off now and go scot free.

"A divorce?" She sort of liked the idea. They would say: "Poor girl! Her life was a hell upon earth with him. Drink! He was never sober. And she had to put up with that, day in, day out. She stuck to him as long as she could, poor girl, but—"

"A divorce!" Even if he did pull himself together and begin writing anew, she would share the credit in a way. They would point to her: "You know Sheridan, the poet. That's his divorced wife!"

"A divorce?" A divorced woman always had admirers. There was a something about her that attracted men. "A divorce?" The word thrilled her with a sense of daring impropriety.

Very well, then, he had said it. When she saw him in the morning they would talk about divorce, and she would do the talking.

But she never saw him again.

CHAPTER XX

ALL day long Georgia felt disaster in the air, but she had put it aside saying, "If you feel that way, then nothing happens." But she heard the elevator rasp outside the hotel sitting room where she was, and she moistened her throat.

"Here comes Lafe," something told her, "and he knows."

And then she wondered if he would kill her.

It was dusk and she had not yet lighted the lights. Recently there had been terrible gray hours when the lights were repulsive to her and she had wanted to huddle into herself. And this was one of them.

The knob turned. Lafe entered the sitting room.

"Hello, honey!" She was surprised her voice could frame the words. All her lower part, knees and waist and diaphragm, took on a cold trembling. She turned to face him.

Yes, he knew. His face was stern and cold and, what was more than she could bear, contemptuous.

"Lafe!" she managed to blurt out. "Is anything wrong?"

He watched her with a sort of cold surprise, as though she were an unknown and objectionable animal of a mean order—something slimy, furry, that one didn't even care to stamp out.

"You pack your things and get to hell out of this, right away." He said it definitely and coldly.

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And all she could find in her stricken voice to answer was, "Yes, Lafe."

"You understand me?" He took a threatening step forward.

"Lafe, don't kill me! Don't, Lafe, don't!" She shrank back in terror.

"Kill you!" And he laughed. "Your dirty little carcass isn't worth a good bullet. Just get to hell out of here before you're kicked out."

"Yes, Lafe."

She cowered under his contempt more than she would have under blows.

"I'll give you an hour to get collected and out. Then I'm coming back to check out of this hotel. See that you're gone."

He was going.

"You'll want a divorce, Lafe—"

"Don't you worry. I'll see to that."

Good God! He was going! Going away forever!

"I'm sorry, Lafe. Awful sorry! Awful, awful sorry!"

"My mistake—" he stopped an instant. "After all, I'm not the only man who married a—"

And as the door opened the most dreadful of all words struck her in the face. She could hear his ring at the elevator. An instant later he went down the stairs. He didn't wait for the car.

He was gone, gone forever, she knew. Her Lafe! Her boy! She loved him. She knew it now more than ever. And he was gone.

O God! What had she done?

O God! Why did you let me do it?

O God! O God! O God!

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Suddenly her body was racked by terrible sobs, exploding violently within her and tearing her throat on their journey. She dropped her head on her arms and she could feel the wet mark of her face through the thin sleeves of her dress.

She raised her head quickly, as though she had heard something. Perhaps he was coming back. But he wasn't coming back. What was she going to do?

But he wouldn't come back. He wouldn't forgive, and she had no right to expect it. And even if he did and took her back, she wouldn't accept it now. How could she live with him, both knowing the wrong she had done him? That would always be between them like a leering, jeering, hideous ghost. She hadn't done it for love, she hadn't done it for free passion. She had been just seduced by a man twice Lafe's age, with not one quarter of his looks or build. O God! The filth of it! No, she could never be with Lafe again.

The thought of the refuge of the river came to her, but she drew back in fear. It was not the ending of her days that terrified her, though that did, too, poor child! but the thought that were she to jump, in a few minutes she would have struggled through the web of death and there would be God directly on the other side of that. And God would be very like Lafe, only of infinite majesty. Before that high and blinding face, which would see her in all her soiled degradation, how could she stand? From it whither could she flee?

Her mother? Oh no! No! no, no! Oh no! Not that! No, no! Her mother must never know. Never! Never! Never!

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Well, there was only one thing to do and she must do it, and that was go to Chess. There would be shelter for her—for a time at least. He would not marry her—she knew that. He was, as his sort put it, not a marrying man.

She was still sobbing and began pulling things out of drawers blindly, for she must get away before Lafe came back. And then the thought came to her that the things she was taking away were Lafe's things. He had bought them for her. She had no right to them.

But she couldn't go to King without something. This was not a great passion. He would not accept her as a man who loved her would, without a shoe to her foot or a comb to her hair.

She must dry her eyes.

A—what Lafe said she was—could not afford the luxury of crying, could not afford the luxury of honesty. She must ply her trade. And as she gathered the things he had bought for her, and packed them to bring to another man's house, she understood the phrase "a fallen woman." A fallen woman! How terrible the word was, and how terrible the fact! Fallen!

"Oh, Lafe! Oh, dear heart! Why couldn't I have been content with what you had? Why couldn't I have lived in a workman's shack with you? Or out under the stars, if there was not even that? What was the dancing and the lights and the mumming shows compared with the way you cared for me? And I cared for you. Oh, Lafe! Oh, my dear! Oh, my boy! Oh, my own dear husband!" . . .

Too late! Too late!

Book IV
THE JEWELLED SNOUT

CHAPTER XXI

I

TURN back to the Sunday supplements of five years ago and see her in the papers. Look at the noble figure, the splendid, the compact shoulders, the pillary neck. The hair that was the color of flax, the eyes that were brown, the face like an impertinent child's. Take her for all in all, there was a woman!

At balls such as are dubbed the Artists-this-or-that, where women of the brass-band section of society rub shoulders with illustrators of the commercial variety, an occasional actress of musical comedy obeying her press agent, a group of wine merchants and automobile agents, you would always see Sappho Shores in tableaux, representing now the spirit of Liberty, now the queen of the Amazons, now *pour la France!* Don't talk to her; just watch.

At those morose plays which dramatic guilds meet in secluded places and with hushed breath to present—"strong" Russian or Polack pieces with a murder or a suicide in every scene—there you would find her in a box with friends. She is watching the piece with rapt attention. Ah! an intellectual!

Take an exhibition of advanced art, such as occasionally bursts on New York—cubist, vorticist, what not. She would be there, chatting gayly,

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democratically, with the half-starved, half-crazed fanatics who forgather here, slaving against men of established reputation. She seems to understand this strange jargon of line and composition. She appreciates why "The Nude Descending the Staircase" is greater art than Zuloaga's "Portrait of a Spanish Cardinal." See the respect the Michael Angelos of Greenwich Village accord her. Surely it can't be for her Hickson clothes, her Tappé hat, her little wrist watch in platinum and diamonds. Art has no interest in money. It wants only appreciation.

Go to the great studio she had in those days, the great duplex residence on Central Park. Stay in the shadows there while you watch the group around the samovar. There you will find the newest sculptor, about whom *Vanity Fair* has just emitted a hysterical scream of admiration. A rather soiled great Russian thinker will be present, gulping down great mouthfuls of muffins and thundering against the capital he despises and whose hospitality he is now enjoying. There will be some gaunt actress of Electra sneering pathetically at the cinema, and there perhaps will be a young actor who has played the lead in some obscure Russian study telling how Hamlet should be acted, and, were the stage not controlled by a ring of commercial-minded crooks, and so forth. . . . And through it all moves Sappho, calm, intense, interrogating this or the other guest and listening to their replies with eager ears.

A fine woman you say, a woman eager for society, yet with an interest in the arts, no vulgar wife of a

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millionaire, but an intellectual; no oppressor of the poor, but one with interest in the laborer. Listen! She is promising twenty-five hundred dollars toward the foundation of a new labor organ—a weekly, to be called *The Unfettered*. And she is to be one of the editors of it also.

What a fine modern woman! And what a gracious, antique name!

One thought suddenly of Sappho of Lesbos, greatest of women poets, greatest of Greeks next to Homer. And for form and beauty one could not think her less or greater than her namesake. Don't speak to her, just watch, and you could imagine her looking down the cliffs of Mitylene to where the blue *Ægean* crashed below in a music no more majestic than her own. One could imagine her lulling her little *Clëis* to sleep with words rarer than rubies. Or, looking up, wide and wet eyed in the dusk at the evening star:

O Hesperus! thou bringest all:

Thou bringest the wine; thou bringest the goat:

Thou bringest the child to the mother's knee . . .

Sappho Shores! Sappho of the Songs!

Occasionally you noticed the man beside her, a bashful, silent sort of man, with a cropped mustache and the ribbon of the Spanish-American War in his buttonhole. You were told that was her husband, and you felt disappointed. He was a good man, a fine type of honest citizen, and you nodded appreciatively when you heard that as a boy of seventeen he had fought on San Juan Hill. What was this he did? Oh yes, he manufactured shoes. To be

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sure, Shores! A fine fellow, doubtless, but—oh, well, hardly the husband for a magnificent creature like Sappho. A bit of disappointment, eh? Ah, well, she must have married young. There was some explanation, surely. . . .

II

He had come in from his morning's ride in the Park—the only relaxation of his day—and had changed into street dress, and was eating his breakfast before going to his office. A hard day was before him and a hard year. Only yesterday had been signed a great army contract, and where another man would have rejoiced and taken it easily, Tom Shores was anxious and keen. There was war in the air and his job was to shoe those men. Second only to the guns, shoes were the important thing of the army. Other manufacturers were figuring on how much they could skim on workmanship and material. But he had been a soldier himself. Downtown they were talking of loans to be protected, trade rivalries to be wiped out, rights and wrongs, whys and wherefores. It was all rather too deep for Tom, but one thing was certain—his country was going to war. Wisely or foolishly, his country was going into it. His job was to shoe those men. It was the job of a farrier sergeant on a grand scale. And as simply as a farrier sergeant would obey the squadron commander, demanding neither rights nor wrongs of the matter, so would he obey the nation.

Of course there would be difficulties, as there

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would be to any big job. There was talk of strikes, of labor agitators. He was going to forestall trouble right away, going about it in the only way he knew, the simple and direct way. He was going to call his factory together and talk to them:

"I got something to say to you, people," he had already drafted out in his head, "and I don't want you to take me up wrong. We got a job and that's to put shoes on soldiers. Now, first of all, I don't want any but Americans here. Understand me, I ain't got anything against any other race, Swede or Polack, Jew or Italian, but this is an American job and a job for Americans. I want guys I know on my team.

"Now, here's another thing I want you to get into your heads. There's liable to be a peck of trouble around about capital and labor and war profits and hell knows what. First, I tell you straight. There could be a pile of money in this job, but the way I'm going after it I'm going to do good work for fair returns. See? I'm going to treat the country square, just as I always try to treat you square.

"If anybody tells you I'm making a flock of money out of this, and that you ain't getting your fair share, come straight to me and have it out. Don't go about with a chip on your shoulder. You can look at the books. Is that fair?

"Now you know me. If this job don't look good to you, keep out. But if you come in, stick. Don't quit in the middle of it.

"I think that's all, unless you got something on your mind."

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He knew his workingmen, his own countrymen. They would stick for a square deal. If you were against them, they were against you. If they thought you were using them for excessive profits, they'd get their share or fight you to blazes and back again. Foreigners were a different matter—treat them as square as you knew how and they'd stick you all the harder. But his own countrymen, they'd be level with a man who was on the level with them.

He drank his last cup of coffee and put the paper down. In a minute he would take his hat and gloves from the hands of the English butler whom he despised and who despised him after the manner of his kind. Shores hated the supple, sneering back of the servant, and would have loved to break it with an honest kick. But Sappho would have an English butler.

And as he was rising she came in.

"Good morning, Tom," she pecked him a perfunctory kiss and sat down. "Can you just spare me a moment?"

"Why, yes, of course I can," he acceded, though he really couldn't.

"It's nothing very much." She reached for a napkin. "Just that Jacob Western and Jim Howard are starting a bi-weekly and have asked me to join them on the editorial board."

"How much?"

"Oh, you practical business man!" she laughed. "Only twenty-five hundred."

"Oh, all right, if it amuses you, kid. But look here," he thought, "I suppose this is to be some sort of a labor magazine."

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"It's to try and educate the workingman to a sense of his rights. *The Unfettered*, we are calling it."

"Well, to tell you the truth, Sappho, I don't think it's quite fair to use my money for propaganda to make the men strike against me."

"Don't be so immersed in money, Tom, that you can't see the other side."

"Oh, I see the other side, Sappho. I know the workingman. Also I know he never reads these highbrow sheets that capitalize him more than the employer does. Here's your check. Now I want to ask you to do something for me. Will you come with me to-night to the opera?"

"The opera, Tom?" she laughed. "What's on?"

"*Aida*.' It's the only one of the things I understand and like."

"Oh, Tom!" She laughed until her head was bowed. "You are delicious. You are the most typical lowbrow in America. '*Aida*!'"

"Well, it's the only one I like. Will you come?"

"I couldn't, anyway. I have to go to-night to the Poetry Guild of North America. Jeejeebhoy the Parsee poet is to recite his '*Vignettes of Goa*.' You'd better come with me."

"God forbid!" He shook his head. "I think I'll go to the club to-night," he said, pathetically.

"And, Tom?"

"Yes."

"I've invited a few people to the country house for the week end. You don't mind?"

"Not at all. Do I know them?"

"They're not exactly in your line." She smiled.

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"There's Padraic Joyce, the Irish painter, and Gertrude Maxwell, the *vers libriste*, and of course Tony, Tony Felix from the Comédie Française. He's going into the cast of the new Brieux play, you know. And Sara Jones."

"Sara Jones, the birth-control woman?"

"Sara Jones, the economist," she corrected.

He turned at the door, really furiously angry.

"Now look here, Sappho, this is really going too far. That woman is a public menace. I'd rather not have her at my place."

"Really, Tom, you capitalists make me furious. Just to get employees for your factories, you want the workingman to have a family he can't possibly support—"

"Listen, Sappho, I know the workingman. And let me tell you this. All the birth control in the world doesn't mean that to him—" and he snapped his fingers. "He wants children, and he has them, and he likes them. And even if he didn't he is too religious and his wife is too religious to have any truck with the rotten propaganda Sara Jones and her lecherous gang spread around. The only person who falls for her is the unfortunate girl in New York who falls in love with a man she can't marry. And Sara Jones promises her immunity. There's thousands of girls in New York alone who will curse the day they ever listened to Sara Jones's truck—"

"Oh, you'd love to see everyone with children. You'd like me to have a half dozen around me."

"Indeed I would, Sappho, and a damned sight better and healthier it would be for you than the

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collection of parasites and dog's-eared amateurs you carry around now."

"I can't rescind the invitation to her."

"Then don't expect me. I'll stay in town this week-end."

He closed the door and crossed the hall. The butler handed him his hat and gloves.

"Yes, sir."

"Some day I'll break that creaking spine of yours!"

"Yes, sir. Thank you, sir!"

"Damn!"

III

One saw in Tom Shores a collected, well-balanced citizen. One thought of him as the average good citizen. He was wealthy, but compared with the magnates of the oil, of the steel, of the coal commodities, he was a fairly well-off man. But where they were hated, he was wished good luck. No paper would ever inveigh against him as a menace to the commonwealth, no patriot accuse him of fostering crooked legislation, no fanatic ever use knife or gun. He made money because money came to him as a natural consequence of industry and fair dealing.

There was no exaggerated simplicity in his life, no idiosyncrasies, neither was there any immodesty of display. He belonged to his clubs, he rode his horse, he enjoyed a solid dinner, a highball at his club. Were the average man to achieve money suddenly and still keep his head, he would be uncommonly like Tom Shores.

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A modest man, in clothes, in habits, in spending, the only garishness in his life was his wife, Sappho.

Before he had married her, six years ago, he had been a well-groomed, man-about-town type of bachelor. A man's man, as the phrase is. Up to thirty, he had had a fairly hard struggle, bringing the little factory his father had left him in Brooklyn up to the point where it was not negligible in national commerce. There had been hard work, stirring days, nights of nervousness, and suddenly he had turned the corner and was on the road to prosperity.

From thirty to thirty-nine he lived alone. He had his little bachelor apartment on Madison Avenue, with a loyal, urbane Japanese to do for him, but mainly he affected his clubs, where his friends greeted him with that affection that is as lovely in its modest hues as the multihued coruscations of love of women. A succession of well-deserved modest pleasures was his. He would occasionally make a trip to Bermuda with a few men friends, where they sailed under the direction of a negro pilot from Hamilton to Saint George. There would be a fishing trip to Long Key. There would be a hunting expedition in Maine. Or perhaps with a few friends he would go down to Louisville to see the Kentucky Derby run over Churchill Downs, and risk a modest hundred on the entry that took his fancy. Occasionally a week at Pinehurst would brighten the winter, where if he shaved the course under a hundred he was tremendously elated. And very respectfully he watched the

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crack amateurs and the great professionals tear into the tee-shot and bang confidently for the back of the cup of the inimical sand greens.

Occasionally at his clubs he would sit in a friendly bridge game or in a mild party at draw or stud poker. Amateur bouts at the athletic clubs he delighted to see. And many evenings he spent in his own apartment, in a comfortable Morris chair, enjoying Mr. Irvin Cobb's splendid stories in the *Saturday Evening Post*. Or he would read a romance of Mr. Henry Rideout's, or Mr. Post's tense mysteries with eager attention, closing the book with a sigh and nod of wonder that those fellows could think all those things up.

At thirty-nine he knew little of women. He had worked hard until a few years before, and, though there were many set their caps at him, provocative not unyoung widows, mature spinsters with bashful forward ways, young girls—all the hazards of the bachelor—yet somehow he had managed to escape.

"Old Tom," his friends said. "It won't be easy to catch him."

He had never become trammelled with a woman. First of all, he had the fine chivalry of his country toward them. Then he was not of the adventurous, exploring nature that seeks to understand the mystery of them, why the hold, whence the thrill. And again he was a trifle sentimental; a strain of Scotch ancestry endowed him with that, though it was not as broad and patent as a Scot's, nor as facile and shallow as an Englishman's. Yet it was there. Often a merry evening at the club would

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break up with a friend singing the song of the comedian Lauder:

“Just a wee deoch-an-doris
Just a wee drap, that’s a’!
Just a wee deoch-an-doris
Before we gang awa’!
There’s a wee wifie waiting
In a wee but-and-ben.”

He would feel a tremendous tenderness at the thought of a little woman waiting for some one. Ah, that was home! No Japanese valet with his almond eyes and mysterious grin could make up for that. . . .

But one afternoon he returned from a trip to Pennsylvania, looking very happy and ten years younger. And his friends knew what had happened.

“Well, boys,” he confessed, “I’m certainly in luck. The finest little woman in all the world has said she’d marry me!”

“We knew it. We knew it. They all fall sooner or later.”

“Gee! I don’t see how she can have anything to do with a dub like me! Gee! fellows, she’s a wonder!”

And plans were made and invitations held forth for activities after the wedding. Parties here, visits there. They’d all have to come to his house, and—

But somehow, after the ceremony, these invitations were allowed to lapse, the activities never entered into, the parties never held. And the older men smiled wisely and said nothing, and the younger men complained bitterly:

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"Isn't it funny how marriage cuts off a man from his friends?"

IV

There was a tradition abroad that Sappho Shores was of an old Pennsylvania Dutch family, great in Colonial times—a variant of the antebellum Southern story, so beloved of minor actresses. Perhaps that was possible, for old families endure. A few die dramatically, as on the field of battle, but mainly they increase and become impoverished, and nothing remains after a few generations but hereditary arrogant attributes and a sense of enmity toward all new things.

That she may have come of good family is very possible, but the fact is that she was a model in a Philadelphia cloak-and-suit house when Tom Shores met and married her.

He will never forget that evening when a couple of friends invited him to a cabaret, and told him they'd bring a couple of girls along who'd show him that Philadelphia was not as dead as New York liked to believe. Oh no! Nice girls. And Tom Shores consented to go. It was an innocent evening such as he and his kind enjoyed. A little music, a little merriment, a clumsy dance or so, a few bright and good-looking girls.

And so they came. Delmars, the widower, of the Merion Cricket Club, that foxy old tournament golfer, and young Jones, the architect, and thither came the girls also—the bronze-haired little Balkan Jewess, piquant, snappy on the tongue, ready to resent any criticism of herself or her religion; the slim, dark-

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haired girl with the languishing Latin beauty, who said little, because she had nothing to say, who danced only passably, but whose looks were passport enough to any party. One could imagine her anything—Balkis, queen of Sheba, or Cleopatra, daughter of the Ptolemys, before she was beloved of Cæsar or of Antony.

If the little Jewess was piquant, like some tropic plant, and her friend was exotic, like some jungle flower, Sappho was fine and healthy and all but reginal. She was not for Delmars, that likable old scoundrel, who liked the kick in the Balkan girl as he liked a kick in his cocktail, nor was she for young Jones, who was luxuriantly romantic and who was building dream palaces for the Latin beauty. But she was the sort of person Tom Shores adored.

All through the dinner she had a smile in her for the New Yorker, as the other couples laughed merrily. She seemed to be saying to him: "It's rather amusing to see them, but this is hardly for you or me. We want something else, we two. Life is not this alone. I wonder what it is."

Shores moved closer.

"You don't seem to be a regular cabaret frequenter, Miss Dunscombe. Somehow you don't seem to fit in here."

She smiled at the implied compliment.

"Considering that I was brought up in the Society of Friends and was trained to be a school-teacher, I think it's wonderful I come here at all."

"But you're not—"

"A school-teacher? Dear, no! I thought you

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knew. I'm a model for Hyams & Arnstein. The old dreams"—she shook her head—"of the little red school and the gray meetinghouse are by these many days."

Shores sensed a money loss somewhere. He looked away.

"I'm sorry," he said, sincerely.

"Are you?" she brightened. "Thank you. So few people understand."

She talked to him about New York, mentioning plays that were being produced, new books published which he was ashamed to admit he had never heard of. He felt an immense surge of pity and chivalry suddenly for this beautiful young woman condemned to a life so far from the things she liked.

"I am glad you came to-night," he told her in his boyish simplicity.

"Now I am glad, too." Her words implied that she was glad because she met him. "I was feeling blue and lonely from being at home at night all week in the boarding house. Rachel"—she nodded toward the little Jewess—"was asked by Delmars to bring a friend, so she persuaded me."

The fear that had been growing in Shores's heart that she was married or engaged—or, worse, that she was *belle amie* to one of the local magnates and lived in some bijou apartment—was lifted from his heart with a rush. So this magnificence was free, and was a good girl, too; the boarding house was evidence of that. Why, he might have known she was good! God bless her! The little Quaker girl who wanted to teach in the red schoolhouse and

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to whom Fortune had been unkind. He felt like kicking himself for half harboring the thought for an instant.

"Don't you care to dance?" she suggested to him.

"I am so clumsy. I have never quite gotten the hang of it."

"We'll try." She stood up, slipping her light opera cloak off and appearing suddenly in all her beauty like a great white rose. And in a daze he was going along the floor in the one-step, doing well. She danced with a sort of calm majesty, and very lightly on her feet, as big women do.

"Why, you dance very well," she told him. "Why do you say you are clumsy?"

"But—I never danced like that before." She patted his arm, in a gesture that was half maternal. For all his years, he had become suddenly like a blushing schoolboy. . . .

When the time came for breaking up, he asked to see her home in a taxi, and the momentary look she gave him, before she consented, hurt him pleasantly. She gave him the impression that she was hesitating lest he was the sort of man who would try to kiss and be foolish toward her on the way. He resented her momentary look, but he was glad, glad to the heart of him, that she was a girl who would not allow those liberties.

"I'm afraid I'm taking you to a rather poor part of the town, but if you will take working-girls home you must expect boarding houses. Though," she added, bitterly, "like the rest of the workinggirls, I've been offered my flat and car."

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He knew what she meant and the thought choked him.

"Don't, please!" He couldn't bear her bitter mention. And the reality in his tone brought out that queer little understanding pat she had given him before.

At the door he stood bareheaded.

"Miss Buchanan, would you, could you," he stammered, "have dinner with me to-morrow night, any place you say, any time—"

"Mr. Shores, I ought to warn you I'm not in the habit of going out much, and then usually with my girl friends—"

"I know, Miss Buchanan, but—surely for once," He was at a great loss for words. "It seems incredible to think I won't see you again. I—I seem to have known you so long."

The unaccustomed, simple admiration was too much for her, and she acceded immediately where otherwise she would have feinted and sparred and given in only when she felt she had impressed a man sufficiently.

"Well, if you call up to-morrow morning," she whispered, and let herself in.

He dismissed the taxi, preferring the long walk to the Racquet Club. The blocks slipped by like so many yards, and once he stopped, surprised at himself, for he suddenly discovered that as he walked he sang.

V

Since she was twenty-two and had given up the idea of teaching school for the more lucrative and

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pleasant job of being a model, she had thought to herself quite a lot about marriage. In the milieu in which she moved, the one thing a woman had to do was to get her man. That was success.

They are a small world in themselves, these manufacturers' models, with a distinct psychology. Nearly every one of them comes from a family oppressed by wretched poverty, and nearly all are beautiful. In the most impressionable years of their childhood it is dinned into them that lack of money is a terrible thing. It is never suggested to them that their good looks or their firm little bodies are tangible assets, for the households are moral, as the poor mainly are.

But one day comes a realization to themselves of their good looks, these orchids in the honest kitchen garden, and dissatisfaction boils in them, and some girl friend suggests a way. Some flee one night to the chorus of a burlesque show, or some—God pity them!—somewhere else, and the others become models for a cloak-and-suit establishment.

Here they are now, gowned by Paquin and Callot, groomed like a mare in a show ring, and to them come women who have money, and, having money, have everything—women of the *beau monde*, not half so pretty as they; wives of men who have made millions in potted eggplant, or something equally exalted, pig faced, pig mannered, perspiring terribly. And always the lesson was hammered home to them: have money and you have everything—clothes, cars, diamonds.

They have, too, their taste of luxuries. There are always men to buy them dinners at a great

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hotel, take them to a box at the theater, so that the audience can see what they have with them, and murmur in their respective dialects: Look at that magnificent creature in the box with young Hawkins. She is wearing that new lily costume. Or: Gee! pipe the swell dame with that guy. I'll say he's lucky! At Atlantic City, and the races at Jamaica and Belmont Park, it is their duty to be there.

But they are wise after their kind. They want marriage with the money. Money without marriage is easy. And so is marriage without money. But the combination of both, that is success.

Yes, they may love, too, but not the man they marry, if they are successes. They may love terribly, deeply, but it will be some one of their own kind, some one who, when all bluffs and convention are laid aside, will speak their own language. Him they will desert when marriage comes. They find no difficulty in persuading their husbands that they are virtuous workinggirls. Anyone with money and who marries them is fool enough to believe them. Of course there may be exceptions, the sort of exceptions that made Aquinas's rule.

There had been nothing in Sappho's life, no love affair, either criminal or innocent. Her training for a school-teacher had raised her standard above those of the Irish or Polish workman's daughter, or the brood of the Ghetto tailor. And then, of course, there was her education, which she overrated.

But one thing she had which was of her surroundings, and that was her intention to get her rich man. She considered herself above the usual run of

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models. She had looks, she had a figure, and she had what she flattered herself was brains. Already she had had several offers of marriage and several which were not of marriage. But the offers of marriage in which money counted were two—one with a callow college boy, whose people, she knew, would make more trouble than she ever could combat, and one was from an unclean old man of seventy, whose will could be broken like glass. And even if it were not she could not face the hideous ordeal of that arrangement.

Into neither of these affairs would love enter. The boy's romantic passion might last a week of marriage or three months of it, but more it would not. And the evil of the old man was nothing but mental disease. But when Shores came he was made for her. He loved her—even the blindest of women could see that. And he was the right age for her, neither too young nor too old. She could manage him easily too; he loved her adoringly; she didn't care about him, so she had the whip hand over him there. He had no family, so there were no traditions to combat, either of aristocracy or of penury. She could hew life out in her fashion. And he had money—not a tremendous amount, it is true, but he had his couple of millions and would make more.

She decided it was a good cast, and also that there was no use in losing valuable time letting the fish sniff the bait. So the third time they had dinner together she played and gaffed him.

They were in a cozy corner at the Bellevue-Stratford roof garden. Palms hid them from

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diners and waiters and the thrumming band. She gave him her serious look.

"I want to ask a favor of you"—she looked at the tablecloth—"and I don't want to hurt you, you've been so kind, so understanding. You'll please not misunderstand."

He said nothing, but he looked afraid.

"It's just this, Mr. Shores, please don't ask me out any more, and don't call me up or come near me." His face had gone white. She paused. "You see, I have to think of what people say."

"But what can people say?"

"They can say that you are fond of me, and I am fond of you, and they draw wrong conclusions. You see, you are a rich man and I am just a poor girl!"

"But I am fond of you," he blurted out.

"Ah, Mr. Shores, you see." She shook her head, and a pathetic little smile crept around. "They are right, and I mustn't see you again."

"But, my God! my dear, I want you to marry me."

She looked at him abashed.

"You—you—" It was as though she hadn't heard.

"I want you to marry me if you will." She said nothing but looked down, and a panic came over him that she would not. "I know I'm only a poor dub, and that the things you like are a closed book to me. But, after all, I do care for you, and I could try my best to make your life happy. I'm sure I could. The little things that should be yours and that money could buy would be all yours. Could you, do you think?"

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She never raised her head.

"You see, I've known you such a short time. I honor you and admire you, but love—"

"Perhaps you would try to care for me a little, and then love might come, must come. Would you try?"

"You are so patient, so *kind*, so understanding. I should like to try."

A great surge of love and tenderness came into his heart, and it was as though he were performing a religious ceremony, with a great sense of holiness to it, that he leaned forward and kissed her awkward, lukewarm lips.

CHAPTER XXII

THERE is a discrepancy, you think, between this frigid girl who married for money and the patron of amateur arts and lightweight letters, between the reginal figure of the Philadelphia cloak-and-suit store and the associate editor of *The Unfettered*, between the employee of a pair of Galician Jews and the friend of Hippolyte Hourwich, that eminent and besotted labor writer who claims in his cups to have thrown a bomb at the King of Spain and to have hobnobbed with President Woodrow Wilson in the days he was hailed as "Tommy." But is there a discrepancy? None at all!

Let us revert to the psychology of the model. Once these girls capture their moneyed husband, it is good-by to their old surroundings, their old associates. Put as many miles as possible between them and the store. There are three escapes open to them. The first is the thinning cliques of society, the languid, weak-chinned, half-witted tribe who attend with dull interest the United Hunts meetings, who hire card professionals to teach them bridge. They are rather good at formal dancing, and they are rather afraid of and have a morbid contempt for throbbing muscular America at their door. Their eyes are on the faded roses of England, and their hearts are with the hysteria of royalist France. Very like rats, they huddle in the corner in a posture

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of defense. And, jealous of their thin blood, they fight with every weapon they have—with scandal, with ridicule, with their funny contempt—the efforts of any Irish hodcarrier's or Swedish lumber-jack's daughter to enter their futile freemasonry.

Then there is the Broadway crowd, the only requisites for which are a full purse, in drink a comradely disposition. This is the easiest of all ways, and most affected.

There is also the brass band set who are of Newport and Palm Beach, flushed with money, the product of automobile accessories, war-office looting, cinema exploitation, what not. They sink their heavy plebeian bodies into creaking chairs, and are entertained by men who play polo for money, or impoverished rovers of the Junior League, who play a wicked game of bridge for ten-cent points and are deadly on the putting green at five dollars a hole. One needs a few millions and utter vacuity of mind to belong to this assembly.

But it was for Sappho Shores to break a new field. To hereditary society she could not belong, for who, after all, was Thomas Shores with his couple of paltry millions? The son of a little manufacturer, the grandson of a journeyman shoemaker. On Broadway she would not be a success; she was too frigid, too self-centered. She had not the trick of being pally, as the word is. And she knew too much of cloak-and-suit manufacturers to want to mingle with their wives and daughters at Palm Beach.

But brains and education have a sort of hypnotism for us Americans, and it is very easy to claim them, and we are much too tactful to ask for a demon-

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stration. So we accept as a poet young Jones who has had a villanelle in *Snappy Stories*, or as a wit young Van Peyster, who had had an epigram accepted by the *Smart Set*. This is Carl Beck, the writer. The writer? Yes. There was a short story by him in *Smith's*. Come hither, battle-scarred professional until we crown you with laurel! And this is Isaac Lessing, the critic. Ah, the critic! He is the one who called Winston Churchill a bum and a certain popular writer a knock-kneed pimp. He's way up. He reviewed a book in the *New Republic*.

And you must meet Mr. Karp, the playwright. Of course his name is perfectly familiar, but—he hasn't been on Broadway yet, you understand. The commercial clique who rule the theater. . . . But the sister of the stenographer of a man who had a friend who acted in a Belasco play said one of his manuscripts was Titanic drama. And what do you think of "The Copperhead," Mr. Karp? Tripe? What do you know about that?

She picked up one. She picked up two. And then suddenly Tom Shores's home was snowed under by the crowding hundreds. Poetette followed poetaster and Greek dancer and interior decorator talked of their respective arts in their respective mysterious vocabularies. The man of the house was a little bewildered, but year followed year before he raised protest, and then only in the mildest of ways. This goddess whom he, a poor mortal, had married had her own sacred rites, and who was he to meddle, to profane them with his mere presence. So, quietly, he sat down in the background. Quietly

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he slipped away. At times there was a little ache in his heart, and always there was a sense of disappointment which he combated and refused to recognize.

And now they had come to the eighth year, that mysterious epoch of marriage that has never been satisfactorily explained. It is then the crises appear, then the readjustments, then the divorces, then the tragedies. Some law unknown to us operates them, like the rhythm of the seventh wave. What is it? Why is it? None can answer exactly. We only know that it is the Sinister Year!

CHAPTER XXIII

AGAIN was the June moon in the sky, colored like honey. Again were the trees heavy with gala green. Again the rustle of inhabited grass.

Never could Annis resist the friendly silence of the moon, and, now that Ian had been called to Washington to operate on a certain great man, there was nothing to keep her in the house. Above in their cribs the babies were sleeping, Tim with his perpetual smile, Tom with his serious little face. The chauffeur had gone out to a meeting of his Orange lodge, and the cook had clambered up to bed. Above, the nurse was writing to her "steady," and the maids had gone out to the neighboring movies. And she was alone.

The house could not hold her. The few nights Ian was from home she reserved jealously to herself, thinking how had the year gone, and what balance of happiness was hers.

She passed down the garden path to the gate and opened it and went down the road. And all about her suddenly was the soft Connecticut night and the perfume of the apple trees.

She moved toward the Sound and stopped at the bridge that spanned the little river from the hills. The tide had risen to full and given the rumbling brook a big dignity. Under the moon the great water glinted like shot silk, and there was a great

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hush everywhere. There was only one sail to be seen.

A trout rose and splashed somewhere near her and she moved to the rail of the bridge to look down on the water. And suddenly there arose in her the sense of romance and mystery that bridges have, even the tiniest of them. All bridges were by permission of God, and evil spirits could not cross them. And some bridges were tragic bridges, and some happy ones. They were a queer thing, bridges were. Only last night Ian and she and young MacCallum, the poet, had been speaking of them. MacCallum had told how the old bridgemakers had sacrificed human lives to their pagan gods that the work of their head and hands might stand. A terrible thought, that some chained spirit should guard a bridge against everything—the raging of the elements; against the king's enemies, as the old phrase went; against everything but the act of God.

And Ian had told her something that had great beauty to it: that in the Highlands of Scotland and in Scottish Ireland the older peasants always raised their hats when crossing a bridge and said a prayer—God bless the builder of the bridge!

God bless the builder of the bridge!

And it struck her that those old peasants had what the modern world is fast forgetting, a sense of the importance of the spirit, or the soul, or whatever it is that rises in a straight blue shadow when men and women die.

Not that it couldn't exist properly in the welter of modern life; it could and did. But there was little thinking of it, and without tending it might

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shrivel and die. People worried a lot about their bodies, and puzzled a great deal over their brains, but why couldn't they of moonlight nights think a secret thought or so about the strange, intangible things?

Down the river, past the old mill which had been silent these fifteen years, past the weir where the grass grew, from where she stood on the bridge in the moonlight she could see the dignified trees and white headstones of a little cemetery, a private little burial ground where none were laid to rest any more. And there was great peace there. But there wasn't peace to every burial ground, that she knew as she passed them. Each had an emanation, a collective personality. As she went by some she was troubled and afraid and repelled, and there she knew were buried the men and women to whom their bodies had been everything, and cut off from their bodies they were merely ferocious evil entities with lusts and longings they could not fulfill. Now they were evil spirits whom priests could exorcise and bind, a danger to all living things. And in some graveyards there was a tremendous sense of tragedy, and she felt that this dead population had been all head and all clicking brain. And now in God's spaces they were dazed and lost, compasses without a ship, or with the sorriest of crafts to steer.

But down in the little acre by the river were great quiet and peace and blessedness. It was as though the spirits of kindly men and women had put off their bodies, as one puts off a garment, and, strong and confident, had passed on to as good work and

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as sweet a country as they had known in their loved Connecticut—a phrase of Paul came into her mind—“where Christ is, which is far better.”

Not that one is to be unappreciative of or starve the body, Annis thought, as the monks do. Surely the Master of the Workmen did not intend the covering of his masterpiece to be shunned of eyes. As patently as the thews of men were destined for work, so were the soft curves of women for love. Why the bronze and blue-black and golden tints of hair? Why the eyes of brown and blue? Why the arms, soft as flowers, white as an egg? Why these superb bosoms, great noble knees? Why the fruits of the trees, the fish of the river, the heavy kine in the fields? Were these to be despised, shunned? Everything should be enjoyed, not to satiety, but to the fullness of enjoyment, and the spirit should infuse all! In youth, in maturity, they were the gifts of the All-wise, to be laid aside gently and not regretfully when silver crept caressingly into the hair, and the spirit, grown powerful, prepared to move on.

Marriage was of the spirit, all spirit!

What was it that brought men and women together but spirit calling to spirit. What was it made them suffer the buffets of adversity together, but that subconsciously the spirit said, these things do not matter. All these will pass away, like flowing water, and only you and I remain. What was it that made women go down gladly and confidently into terrible darkness for their babies but the knowledge that a spirit walked with them in the valley where the shadow lay, black as night. And

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young folks who were conscious of the spirit were never satisfied with one life with a beloved. Tell them life ended with a narrow grave, and they were not satisfied. After life they wanted the space of the singing stars to be loving in. What were the parapets of heaven to them without their loved ones?

She remembered to herself how, before she had met and loved and married Ian Fraser, how terrified she had been of death. It was not of the pain of dying. It was not of the fear of utter extinction—for a life that was so lonely and a career that meant so little were nothing to her, and she would have welcomed eternal sleep. But she knew that dead men lived. Others might scoff, and others be silent in vague uncertainty, but she knew and affirmed this, that dead men live. As some folk are born with keen brains and others with dull ones, so she was born with a sense of soul. But the folk she had met, and she a child, were people, with dark souls—women who sold themselves for money, and men who sold themselves for fame—her father and his clique of crapulous mummers. Over there she knew the unknown God had sovereignty, and they were the meanest of his menials.

And she thought to herself, when her soul was reft from her body and she was suddenly in the dark and desert spaces where the rhythm of wandering suns clanged with Titanic energy, who would there be to meet her, who to know her? Her poor, mad mother, her evil father and his fleshly mistresses, they who were bound to Satan who was stoned? What would she be to the terrible entities who had

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mewed and sputtered at her in her part of Lucretia Borgia? A thing to be riven and shredded. All her thought of a future was of a red darkness, what spiritists call the astral plane.

But with marriage and with Ian Fraser there had risen in her soul the sense of splendor in the dark places, and she knew that when we are dead there is glory, not the static tawdry splendor of the vulgar heaven, but a nearer standing to and participation in the Great Design. Nothing is so alien to us as idleness, once we die.

If she were to die, she would pass into Life, into the bustle of it with one end in view, to prepare for Ian's coming, and to see what there was to be done by them once he was there. And were he to go first—and here came a catch in her throat, and a hurried prayer—Please, please. We have had so little time together. Don't part us yet!—how as to a bridal party she would leave earth to go to him when the time came!

And they would be together forever and forever, and when her boys came over she would be there to meet them, to shade their eyes dazzled by the whiteness of the light, and to guide their footsteps weak from earth: "Don't you know me? I am Annis, your mother on earth." And they would stumble toward her, crying gladly, "Our mother!"

She was loath to leave the bridge, so peaceful the night was, so beautiful the moon, so full of gentle mystery the water. But she must go now and see that her babies were comfortable for the night. Above her the moon was smiling, and she thought how much the sight of that honey-colored world

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meant to humans. More than the sun, even, more than all the stars. Mysteriously, inexplicably, it swung the sea like a pendulum and governed the health of smitten men. The sun makes visible to us the germination of the earth, and brings us to wonder: are we not, after all, but as the rising grass that lives not, the kine with no end but to be milked? And in a night of stars one feels less than the dust in that immensity of space. God lives, we know, but what can we be to Him, who are only a few of the teeming millions on a small earth that is but one of millions? And then the moon rises and gives its occult intangible message and promise, like the covenant which was given to Noé, when the waters assuaged on the mountain of Ararat.

She was leaving the spot, when she felt she had forgotten something. And then a smile broke in her eyes and her head bowed, and she laid her hand on the rail.

God bless the builder of the bridge!

CHAPTER XXIV

I

SAPPHO had paused on her way to the door. A faint flush came into her cheek. Her bosom rose and fell a trifle faster. She turned back to her dressing table and took off the left glove she had just put on so smoothly. Again she paused. Then she whipped off her wedding ring and fumbled it into her jewel case. Turned to go out again.

Then Sappho knew for a certainty she was in love.

She was going out to meet him for tea at the Ritz, and already the car was at the door. For the first time in her life she felt her heart come and go and her bosom tingle at the thought of meeting a man.

And this was the fourth time she had ever seen him.

She remembered with startling distinctness every item about him. He had come to her studio apartment just ten days ago, in company with Jack Whittlesea, the actor, who had now become the artistic rage of New York by an abrupt transition, aided by the Widow Bowher's money, from the comedian of "The Same Club" to an exotic "Hamlet." With the blond little animal was a tall, thin, hawk-faced man with black eyes that challenged.

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"Sappho"—the actor brought him forward—"I want you to meet a very dear friend of mine. Benoist de Sousa."

De Sousa bowed and murmured a convention. And Sappho thought that never in her life had she come across a man who looked so much like an Arab sheik.

"Your friend," she could not help but say, "looks like an Arab." Whittlesea laughed.

"Not so far out at that."

"There's a large strain of Moorish blood in the family," de Sousa explained to her.

"Moorish! Like Othello."

"I am Spanol Jew," said de Sousa, arrogantly.

Sappho was at once interested. She had heard vaguely of the race of Spanish and Portuguese Hebrews who were the royalty of the sons of Jacob—had been the champions of their race against the Saracen and against the Christians. Their hands were accustomed to arms, their heads to government. Against them the whole fury of the Inquisition had been unleashed, and yet firmer than royalty they ruled Spain, stronger than republicanism they gripped Portugal. To them the cringing Russians, the chaffering Galicians, were as peons to princes. And in de Sousa's eye there was written that splendid history.

"Are you interested in the theater?"

"A little. I have written some things for the *théâtre intime* in Moscow and Berlin."

"Oh yes, and you are interested in other ways, too." Whittlesea laughed, and de Sousa looked at the actor with a sort of contemptuous ferocity.

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Sappho sensed there was question of a woman in the matter, and she liked de Sousa the more for it. First, because of what she felt was a romantic adventure. And secondly, because he reproved Jack for mentioning it. There was a gentleman's attitude; or was it Oriental? Orientals never spoke of women's affairs. And a Spanol Jew was an Oriental.

Between them both they dismissed Whittlesea, who went off grumbling, and they sat together, oblivious of the rest of the people in the studio. He spoke of ordinary things, but with an air of faint contempt and arrogance that charmed the woman by his side. The black hair, the black eyes, the bronze, hawk-like face, all spoke of race to her. Dressed quietly as a gentleman dresses, there was yet a flair in his black and gold necktie that spoke of the prince to her. His well-kept, muscular hands with the black hairs on the fingers and the one great ring appealed to her.

She thought of him romantically as the splendid outcast, a mixture of bloods to which America was opposed—the blood of Africa and the Jewish strain. When you came to think of it, Othello the Moor and the blacks down South were one and the same race. In a shallow way she felt that the negro peoples were not appreciated. She had heard some of their spirituals by the Tuskegee singers, and she concurred in the opinion of her set that these were worth Bach and Beethoven. She had also read Doctor Du Bois' book, *The Souls of Black Folk*, and it had aroused in her the same lukewarm appreciation that the Hopi Indians would have

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had from her after an exhibition of their folk dances and native industries. It made her different, as the adjective is.

In her set, also, there was little prejudice against Jews, but she knew that the lower classes, on account of their commercial keenness, distrusted them, also that society denied their pretensions, so she was very much for them. It was not through any love of their racial virtues, or admiration for the great men they had produced through history, but just because it was different.

Here to her hand was something that could show she was different from the ordinary American, that showed she was cosmopolitan, enlightened, broad. Spanish, Hebrew, and negro in one succulent specimen. The men and women of her country were not enthusiastic over Spaniards—they had disturbed the gracious tenor of the Republic some years before. As to the negroes, they were not keen on them; they had had to lynch too many of them. And in the main, the crimes for which negroes were lynched were the crimes for which white men would be lynched, too. And as for the prejudice against Jews, was that entirely American? What of Russia? What of Germany?

De Sousa! What a name. How romantic, how ringing it was! Why hadn't she a name like that? De Sousa! Sappho de Sousa; Sappho—de—Sousa! Oh—h—h! Oh!

II

A few nights later she had de Sousa to dinner, and she saw immediately with a sense of pleasure

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that Tom did not like him. Of course Tom wouldn't! Mentally she contrasted the pair at the dinner table. Tom, neat, burgess like, effective, a little gray at the sides of the head, a little tired about the eyes; de Sousa tall, rangy, arrogant. His evening clothes had a dash of magnificence to them, the heavily flowered white brocade vest, the tie that flared like pennants. In his left eye was a monocle. She could see him, in her imagination, as the younger age of Solomon the King. She could see him in her mind's eye on Seder nights leaning back royally, reading from the scroll. "Slaves we have been in Egypt," the arrogant voice would ring out. . . . Over his shoulder he would sprinkle the wine that repudiated the plague of Egypt and on his table was a glass full to the brim for Elijah the prophet, were he to enter. . . .

"Your name is an uncommon one, Mr. de Sousa," Tom was trying to make conversation.

The stranger had been studying Shores for a while before dinner and knew that Shores didn't like him—not on account of his race—but on account of his air and manner and somewhat exaggerated clothes. It was a quality Sappho's husband found hard to define, but he put it in his mind as "un-American." That was enough.

"Not so uncommon," de Sousa laughed. "It was a de Sousa, an ancestor of mine, who founded Brazil."

"Brazil?"

"Oh yes. But that's a long time ago. Fifteen hundred and thirty."

"I'm afraid," Sappho laughed, "that my husband

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is more up on boots than on Brazil, and on hides than on history."

"Oh yes, of course."

And all joined in the laugh. Even Tom himself laughed, though in his heart he was hurt. He never quite became used to this—that a wife should make little of her husband before people.

The other guests—an interior decorator, a fulsome bearded man and his wife, a thin, fair, pre-Raphaellish woman; a woman literary agent who was trying to place Sappho's free verse and a man singer of sorts, also an Irish servant girl who had turned actress with the Gaelic players and was "refreshing, so elemental, so *real*!"—were all interested tremendously in what de Sousa had to say. Now he was speaking of Africa, talking of the Eastern Portuguese, describing an elephant hunt; now of Monte Carlo; now of Cairo.

Tom would have liked to say nothing, to just eat quietly and slip away on some excuse, but he felt that the man was a guest in his house and that he must be nice to him, entertain him, show an interest.

"Your English, Mr. de Sousa, is flawless," he complimented.

"It ought to be fairly good," de Sousa smiled. "I was at Eton and Oxford."

And then everyone laughed at Tom again.

"I suppose you are across here on business."

"I'm afraid I'm not as interested in business as I ought to be. I'm more interested in our vineyards and olive plantations than I am in our big banking business in Goa and Macao."

Sappho's eyes lighted. Ah! The man had

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money then. He was probably one of the banking princes of the Rothschild kidney.

"But Macao is not Portugal." Tom was surprised.

"Of course not, my dear Mr. Shores," de Sousa drawled. "Of course not. Macao is in China and Goa is in India, but they are both Portuguese possessions, as you mayn't know."

"I had forgotten," Shores admitted. "Perhaps I never knew," he added.

And again there was laughter, and he felt as though he were some poor half-witted fellow whom these good people had allowed to eat with them as rather a good joke, instead of being the man of the house whose bounty permitted these unmannerly folk to supplement their rare good meals.

"You see," Sappho whispered to de Sousa, "what I have to put up with!"

He nodded understandingly. There was a smile at the corners of his lips.

The party at the table broke up. The literary agent nailed Tom Shores to suggest that Sappho's poems be brought out at his expense privately. She knew of a publisher just starting, a nice boy, just over from England. . . . The servant girl who was engaged with the Gaelic players and the temperamental singer joined in a jeremiad against John McCormack. . . . The interior decorator, and his wife with the legs thin as a dog's, talked together in half whispers as to the possibility of doing a little business. Shores, it was rumored, had bought a new house, and if they could only get a room or two to decorate they would eat regularly for a year. . . . De Sousa walked out after Sappho.

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"You must have been married very young."

She knew what he implied, that she must have been a child; unwitting of the world, to have wed this lout of the dinner table.

"Yes," the words came slowly, "I was—young."

He turned and faced her. His black, intense eyes caught and held her.

"Will you come and have lunch with me to-morrow, some place out of the way and quiet, where we can talk, you and I?"

The direct, startling attack of the man thrilled her and she didn't answer for a moment, savoring the thrill to its utmost while she looked at him with smiling, mysterious eyes.

"You needn't be afraid. . . ."

III

No! She needn't be afraid!

Her honor—or her physical integrity, shall we call it?—was safe in de Sousa's hands.

Why are we so blind, so trusting, we of the New World, confident as children. We boast, as children do, that we come from Missouri, in the phrase of the day; that we must be shown. And then wide-eyed as children we listen to every impostor's tale. A woman appears out of nowhere and calls herself Madame Hapsburg, and announces she is the natural daughter of old Franz Josef who is dead. And now she must work for a living, she, the fruit of a royal amour! Alas, poor lady! and we dip in our pockets. And now it is a prince of Beluchistan. And now an English baronet whose remittances

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have not come through—deuced hard luck, what! what! And thanks so much, old thing!

And very rarely it is one of our own people, like this renegade of Houston Street, who called himself Benoist de Sousa, a prince of Israel.

As little as one would care to meet or know Bernard Solomons, so little do I care to write about him. But as the good and the evil are met in life, so must they be met in a story, which is a microcosm of living. And Bernard Solomons is as evil as there is in this world.

He murdered no man, he robbed no bank, he committed no notable blasphemy. But there are more evil things than these. There is disloyalty. And disloyal to himself, and disloyal to his race, and disloyal to his parents, and disloyal to his country this man is.

Born in Houston Street, of a poor, hunted father who had found sanctuary in America from the terrors of the Black Hundreds, young Solomons grew up with personality and brains. His mother died when he was a baby, and old Baruch Solomons, his father a journeyman tailor, was both father and mother to him. You can see in your imagination this bowed, kindly old Hebrew, so terribly in love with his boy, proud of his brains, proud of the son's Talmudic knowledge—hoping perhaps he would be a rabbi, deeming no sacrifice too much that would give his son an education, asking only that his son be there when he died, to remind him of the word that must be said by every dying Jew: Hear, O Israel, the Lord, the Lord our God is One, and to open the window and rend the clothes, to

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turn the looking-glass to the wall and to spill water on the earth, when he was dead, and to say *Kadesh* that he might live again. . . .

He was proud and thankful and a little fearful when Benjamin got a position with a great Zionist, who was going out to East Africa, when the idea was afoot to found a great Zionist colony there. And the boy promised to bring back earth from Palestine for his father. His father was afraid he would die while Benjamin was gone, but he put that thought from him, believing in the falseness of intuition. It was just as well the old man died, though, soon after his son sailed, or he would have heard of the discharge of the boy for a criminal meanness. He died happy in the belief that he had fathered a phoenix—God rest his poor old soul!

From East Africa, young Solomons journeyed to Cairo, and there began his evil picaresque. What is it, after all, but a record of men cheated and women betrayed? Did a man want to gamble? In a gentlemanly way Solomons would tactfully suggest a club where the game was straight. Did he want to drink hard? Did he want the companionship of venal women? Did he care for the adventure of the opium den? Was he some poor soul crazed by morphine? Anything that was wanted, Solomons could supply. Often he received most of the proceeds of the man's weakness. The rest of the time he got the steer-per-cent, as the underworld phrase is. He wore splendid clothes, out of the payment for which he cheated tailors. He lived at hotels whose bills he was an adept at getting other people to pay.

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But the worst of his crimes, and that on the profits of which he had lived since his return to New York, was the blackmail of women. Blackmail, say the ethicists, is the most morbid of all crimes; it is an offense concealing an offense. It is more than that. It is a damnable thing. It is hitting the crippled, the wounded, the weak, the dead. . . .

Consider for a minute the brains of this man. He sensed that it was the cringing individual of his race who was despised, therefore he was arrogant. He felt that the one who was hated was the one who denied his race, who sought to be more Gentile than Gentiles. He should be hated, as should any treacherous man. Therefore Solomons claimed loudly, "I am a Jew." And as respect was accorded to Paul by Roman men for his pronouncement of his birthright, as respect was given by the world to Mendoza and to Dutch Tom, they of the swing and jab, of the hook and uppercut, so would respect, if not liking, be accorded to him.

And what if men did not like him? What had he to do with them. His business was with women. First he gained their respect by his fighting, then he called forth their sweet chivalry which is always for the under dog, the man with his back to the wall; then he dazzled them with the magnificence of the name de Sousa, with his tradition of Spanol Jewry, with his accounts of wonders seen in foreign lands and on strange seas. They were mostly women of a certain age he picked, women in whom the fiery romance of youth was flaring up before it died, widows who had forgotten their dusty lovers and were avid for one last draught of passionate

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romance, or spinisters who had lost hope of marriage, and into whose hair autumn was creeping—the odd women of life, bewailing their virginity, like Jephthah's daughter. . . . And then they became fond of him, and then they were betrayed. . . .

What did it matter to him then if they discovered he was not Benoist de Sousa, a prince of Israel, but Bennie Solomons, a journeyman tailor's son? That he was poor they were soon to know. "A newspaper man has just found out and called me up about our meeting in Baltimore. . . ." Often their barren escapade cost these poor tragic women ten thousand dollars.

But after forty it is not so easy for a man to be the bait of romance. Words do not come as goldenly as before, or if they do they haven't the true ring, the old compulsion. It was getting difficult for Solomons to play the old game now in New York. Money was not so flush as it had been, and he had none saved; dishonest money rarely endures. He must get a new lay. And the new lay would be an honest lay. He would marry for money.

But that was not so easy as it looked on first sight. A young and moneyed girl would not have him, for the young are not yet coated and calloused by the world. They sense things, and they would sense him for evil. Moreover, there would be fathers and brothers to meet, and he didn't care to have truck with menfolk. The money of widows was usually chained and bound down by wills and trustees. And spinisters wanted young men—poetical, romantic fellows—were they to marry. He would have to find some married woman who was dis-

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satisfied, who was either rich in her own right or rich in a husband who would pay handsomely or be blackmailed for his freedom.

And the type and the individual he was looking for was Sappho Shores.

IV

Now it was the fifth time they had met. They had come together late to have lunch in the little shop on Forty-fourth Street, which was already slipping into the hands of Bohemia. The midday swirl had passed and they were all but alone. They were drinking their coffee and smoking cigarettes. Between them there were bursts of intimate silence.

"I wonder why it is," Sappho mused, "you never married."

"I will tell you." De Sousa put down his cigarette and cup and looked at her. "When one is young, one wants passionate love. Passion knocks and it passes on and leaves you a little older, a little wiser, a little more disappointed. And when one is older one wants sweet sentiment; but that is only a mood, and moods change as days do. But when one is mature, as I am now, one wants dignity and strength. One wants enduring beauty that will grace a house. One wants understanding, the rarest thing in the world. One wants neither a mistress nor a sweetheart; one wants a wife."

"You have never found that woman?"

"I had never laid eyes upon that woman," he said, slowly, "until I saw you."

"De Sousa!"

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"I never met a woman I wanted for my wife until I saw you."

Now they were alone in the restaurant. All the lunchers had gone. All the waiters had withdrawn. In that room there were only they two. Sappho thought with a start how things repeat themselves in life. It was in a restaurant that Shores had proposed to her. But, pah! that was different. He had proposed in a palm-crowded roof garden as he would. Here she was being proposed to in the quiet dignity of a fashionable café. But did de Sousa mean it? Perhaps he was only playing with her.

"You mean that, de Sousa?"

"Sappho, if you were free I would marry you to-morrow, and none but you."

They sat facing each other, probing each other, intense, wary. It was like some tragic card game of marionettes. He wanted her money. She wanted his name and position.

"If I were free! If I were unmarried! If Thomas Shores were . . . dead."

"To-morrow, I would want you, to-morrow, and"—there was a vicious intenseness about his tone—"I would want you only as my wife."

"If I were no longer married to Thomas Shores. If I were to divorce Thomas Shores. Only supposing . . ."

"Sappho, I would make you my wife."

"And again"—her words were slow, wary—"perhaps you wouldn't."

"Sappho, listen to me. I swear to you by what is most holy to me. Listen. I swear by the All-High, blessed be he! and him I call to witness,

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when you are free, you I will marry. And, Sappho, I don't have to swear. There has never been a de Sousa who broke his lightest word."

She was convinced.

"Then you love me?"

"With all my heart and soul!" he told her.

"And you do me a little, Sappho?"

"In all my life," she answered, "I never cared for anyone before."

There was no glad cry between them, no unashamed kiss, no rapid violent gripping of hands. There was only intensity, drama, a heavy and charged atmosphere. A waiter walked in, stood an instant, and only made eloquent the loneliness, the emptiness of the room. He went out again. And Sappho dropped her eyes and said with heavy decision:

"Then I will divorce Thomas Shores."

And he was marrying her for her money! And she was marrying him for his name!

CHAPTER XXV

I

ALL his life Tom Shores had wanted to be fair, so much so that he erred on the side of fairness. And in him was a great chivalry.

Time and again a criticism of his wife had entered his head, but he had put it aside quickly, telling himself it wasn't fair to judge anyone offhand. She was doing her best. And besides, she was a superior woman and he was only a poor everyday man.

Time and again these criticisms came to his mind—time and again. And always he cast them away. And now his life—the spiritual and mental part of it—was like a strip of land in three broad divisions. In front of him was the formal lawn of marriage, clean-cropped, conventional, not unpleasing. On his right-hand side was a queer possession of his, and that nearly every man has, a modest all-but-hidden formal garden of romance—a queer Old World place sunken from the eye of the outsider, pleasant with the scent of homely, sweet-smelling flowers, golden with little sanded paths, with its shaded arbors where the bees droned in the honeysuckle, and here and there was an old apple tree gnarled to the semblance of a kindly gnome; and the moonlight was very kindly in that

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garden when it played on the paunchy little Cupid with his bow and arrows who adorned the modest fountain where the water flowed with a strain of Chaminade. . . .

But to the left of him was an obscenity of dross, a heaping mound of cheap litter that he had flung from his formal lawn, pile upon pile of rubbish such as make the edge of a town hideous, and there were the things his wife had cast on the lawn of marriage and that he had thrown aside, quickly, so that they shouldn't be seen. But now they had become a manner of monument, and it would not be ignored. And recently her own actions had focused a limelight on them. There had been that matter of the birth-control propagandist, and now this cold-eyed de Sousa over whom she was so enthusiastic and who every man's instinct he possessed told him was a parasite and a fake.

He wanted to be fair to her, but all the fairness in the world would not remove that grotesque abundance of unthrashed criticism. There it was. You couldn't get away from it. Look at it from any angle he wished, there was no getting away from it. His marriage had been a failure.

All the inhibited emotions, all the secret denials and thoughts of years, swept over him now in a remorseless, cynical, and very pathetic flood. Now in the light of riper years, unblinded by his wife's queenly face, he could see what he wanted in marriage, and what every man wants.

There on one side was the formal lawn of marriage; there on the other was the hidden garden of romance.

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And his subconscious plan had been to throw them together, to transplant here, to landscape there, to lengthen this path, to remove that boulder, to take slips from this tree and lay them by that little rockery. To make, in fine, a home for his spirit, for two spirits, who became at times magically one.

He saw himself as he was, as he was when he was married, as he was now, the average man. Not particularly strong in personality, not with any great amount of brains, a plain citizen living according to his honest lights. He had money enough for his wants, more and more than enough. He had enough to know that money was not the meaning of life.

And here was what he wanted in marriage—some one to help him understand the meaning of life. He may not have phrased it that way, but what was in his mind was the need the Lord God thought of, and he walking in the garden in the cool of the day, when he designed a helpmate for lonely Adam. . . .

He was the average man, and as the average man is, not all his peers in the world can help him as much as one woman.

They have great friendships, men have, great jollity together, great appreciation, but they have an iron-bound convention, very modest, very fine. The very tender part of the brain or mind or spirit they will not bare to other men. It would be as improper as baring the body. And when rarely it is done by men it is unnatural, it becomes unhealthy, abominable, it develops into a thing "not to be mentioned by Christians," as the old law phrase

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goes. So when a book, a sunset, a picture, a great building, a heroic deed is mentioned, they speak of it sparingly: That's good, they say, first class of its kind! No matter what they feel, they do not riot into enthusiasm or show the strange, tender side of them in their reaction. It is just not natural, as it is not natural for fish to whistle or cows to bark.

But it can and must be shown to women. A gesture, a grip of the hand, a look of the eye, will express it as much as words do. Sometime under a canopy of stars the strange fear will creep into a man's soul, or looking at the terrible rage of the sea or its more terrible languor. The eternal query will come. Does God live? And we cannot thrash that out with a man fully, and show the fear in the face of extermination, the fear of judgment. But a woman will always understand and always feel tender to it.

All these strange, opalescent, intangible things were for the sure spirit and kind hearts of women. The majestic romantic adventure of projecting life that a man has been through and that you sense in his voice when he tells you, in an offhand way, I have a boy, a little son. . . . That had been gone through in the company of one trusting woman.

All the comforts of a community of men could not compare with a fireside where a man would come in the evening and sit down. "This is my world, my all," only his eye might say, "this is what I have carved out of the piece of world given me." And his wife would catch that thought, that moved lightly as a thrown bubble. "Yes, dear, all yours!"

And when the ever possible crash might come, in business or career, though all one's friends were

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to rally around with wealth and help, yet to only one could the stricken cry go, "O Christ Jesus, I am hurt to death!" "Hush, love, hush! What does it matter? I care for you all the more."

And there was no hurt, no rage, no disagreement that could not be charmed away by the dumb lips of an understanding woman. . . .

This was what marriage spelled to Tom Shores.

Well, he had missed it. But he had hunched his shoulders and said nothing. After all, he was man age when he was married. He had seen enough of the world to understand that what one had and what one wants are rarely compatible things. And that stood to him. He was only a poor dub, as he called himself, and what the poor dubs suffer does not matter much to the world. They know it, too. And all they do is to smile their funny little wry smile and carry on.

All he had done was to open his heart a little bit, modestly, invitingly—and then close it again, abashed, quietly. But what would have happened, he thought, with a little shiver, if he had been young and terribly sensitive and romantic, and not strengthened of life? What of the impetuous young men who fling open the portals of their heart with clanging music? What of them when a polar wind blows through it to the inmost warm recesses? In God's name, what of them?

II

For days now, Tony Sheridan had been going around New York in a strange, sinister haze of

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drink. He had left his wife after that last terrible scene with a feeling that everything was ended for him. Through his head there ran a continual eternal pounding—this ends everything.

As naturally now as walking, he turned into the nearest bar and drank. About him people talked and laughed, but their conversation seemed inconsequential as the buzzing of flies. Even the white-robed bartender was strange behind the counter. To Sheridan he seemed a queer mechanical dummy, like that automaton which used to play chess at the Eden Musee. Once the strange thought came to him, I am dead, and with a sense of fear he raised his eyes to the mirror across the bar. If he were dead, there would be no reflection of him there. But there was a reflection of him, a strange, haggard reflection, but a reflection all the same.

And yet something in him was dead.

He left the bar and went to another, and to another from there, and into every assemblage as he came there blew a chill wind. People looked at him, drinking morosely, his brows knitted and his mouth twisted.

"There's a guy down on his luck," they decided, and let it go at that.

But drink as much as he would, there seemed to be no effect on him. Liquor was suddenly a demon that refused to work miracles. It didn't make him shallowly cheerful. It did not make him weep. It aroused no anger in him to boiling fury. It occurred to him that if a man in the death cell, condemned to the chair at early dawn, were to drink all night, and days before, this is how he

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would feel, passive, removed, separated from the rest of humanity by a diaphanous scarlet veil.

"What are you trying to do? Drink up all the booze in town?"

He looked at the friendly bartender and laughed.

"Of all the drinks they is," the bartender warned him, "that brandy is the worst of all. It's poison. It acts on your heart, that's what it does, and you drop down dead. Look at what you done to that bottle of brandy. Just look at! Fellow, you'll go bugs."

"It doesn't seem to have done me much harm."

"No," the bartender admitted. "I never seed a guy could drink it like you do. You pour it down just like it was water."

He returned to his favorite bar on Sixth Avenue toward midnight. He drank in a dazed way.

"Something eating you, Billy?" a flashy, shabbily-dressed man of the broker's clerk type tried to get into conversation with him.

"I'm not feeling extra cheerful."

"The moment I laid eyes on you, I said 'That guy's got trouble. What's he acting like a mummy for? He ain't the kind of guy that drinks if he 'ain't got trouble.' I know what it is. Oncet I got into a mix-up with a girl, and I was soused for a month—"

"Oh, you go to hell!" Tony told him, crisply.

"Oh, how do you get that way? They—"

"Come on, now. You get out." The head bartender called to the parasite; something in the poet's face warned him all was not well. Also he did not want his pet customer to get into a scrap. Perhaps he would never come back.

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"Oh, I wasn't saying anything," protested the broker's clerk. "It was him."

"Go on. You get to hell out of here."

"Mike," Tony asked the bartender, "I don't want to go home to-night, and I'm not feeling well. Do you think I could get a room upstairs?"

"Sure," Mike agreed. "We can fix you up. I'll see the boss. You're among friends here, Mr. Sheridan."

All night long he seemed to drift in and out of a coma. At times he would be unconscious, and then would come consciousness again, in the dark. In the black of the strange room his eyes played terrible tricks on him. Now there were a myriad needle points of blinding light. Now there was a sea of red corpuscles, floating, floating. . . . And then terror would grip him, and he would spring up wildly and turn on the lights. . . . And then there would be a terrible thirst on him, and he would take the glass from the washstand and pour into it a little from the flask beside his pillow, and mix it with water. . . . And again coma. . . .

His wife, his life, his work, all had disappeared. All there was was terrible imminence.

Morning came, and with a miraculous effort of will, he rose. He dragged himself slowly together, slowly washed, slowly went downstairs. It seemed grotesque to him that he was walking about. He ought to be in a hospital. He was dying. He wondered would death come on him in the street.

The bartender eyed him askance.

"Little snifter?" Antony nodded, and the bottle was pushed toward him. He drank and went out.

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An early customer passed a query to the bartender.

"Full of dope?"

"No. Just a little toot." He began mangling ice in the bar. "Maybe he is, for all I know." He thought a minute. "Now that you mention it, he looks queer to me."

All that day was just a period of strange unconsciousness to the boy. Warm, red, terribly unnatural. Something within was already dead, and his mind was drugged, and his body. Only the energy of the alcohol made his legs and arms do their accustomed motions. Occasionally strange, morbid fancies would come to him, echoes of stories he had heard of the European war. A French officer dying in his trench, the last of his men, had seen the enemy sweeping toward, and had struggled to his feet. "*Debout les morts!*" he had screamed. "Get up! Get up, dead men!" And the dead arose, and fought, and died again. He was like one of those dead men. So they must have gripped their guns, as he walked now.

And soldiers told of men without faces who walked in the twilight of the Somme. Surely he was like one of those who walked horribly in the dusk until they crumpled and mercifully died.

Dear God! how long it took to die!

Through the long dark day there were just a few periods of consciousness. In one of those he was at his bank, laboriously writing out a big check. The teller looked at him queerly, studied the sprawled signature, and then carried it to an important-looking official in a suit of homespun. The official had shrugged his shoulders with smug

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cruelty, as if to say: "Well, it's his own money. Oh, let him have it—and let him go, the drunk!" And two or three of them had watched him with smiling ophidian eyes as he made a pretense of putting carefully away the crisp saffron bills. . . . And once, sitting at a table in a café, waiting, he had found himself writing, and with a look of wonder that he should be doing anything like that he read the lines dazedly:

*"In pace requiescat! Let his last rest be
By some green solitude, where breezes may
Sweep the rippling grasses to the melody
Of ballade, and villanelle, and virelai!
Requiem æternam dona ei Domine!"*

He laughed; tore it up. . . .

Toward evening he found himself back in the Sixth Avenue bar. They all looked at him strangely. A sinister numbness was creeping about his jaws and tongue. When it got to his brain he felt he would die.

The proprietor strolled toward him with careful nonchalance.

"Well, how 're you feeling, sport?"

Tony looked at him half blankly.

"Bad, Joe. Pretty bad."

"Y'ain't looking any too well. Why n't you lay off of it for a while?"

"Joe, I want to go home."

"Well, maybe that's the best place for you? Will I call you a taxi?"

"Joe, get me a car. I want to go to New Canaan."

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"New Canaan's in Connecticut, kid. You don't want a car for there. You want a train."

"Joe, here's the money. Get me a car."

"Well, maybe a blow would help you, kid. Your folks up there?"

Tony nodded.

"The way you are now, you'd best be home with your folks. I'll get you an open car. The ride'll do you good, fix you up. Go easy on the booze while I'm getting it."

"Don't drink any more straight whisky, Mr. Sheridan. There, le' me fix you something. A little of old French jazz."

There was the licorice taste of absinthe.

"Another? Another, and no more!"

"Come on, Mr. Sheridan. Here's your car!"

He was being helped into the back of a touring car.

"Adams, New Canaan. Let me write that down. Got it, Johnny. Take good care of Mr. Sheridan. He's a good friend of mine."

Time and space died for him. It might have been only a second when it was dark and the chauffeur was shaking him. Came to his nostrils the odor of the lilac and the apple trees, and to his ears the business of the creatures of the grass.

"Jesus! brace up, fellow! Here you are where you want. Come on, don't let them see how you are. . . . Come on. That's right. Jesus! Look out!"

They were at the door and the door was opening with a release of yellow, mellow light. There was his aunt.

"What can I do— Oh, Tony, Tony!"

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Her arms were about him in a quick, tragic grip.

"O Tony, Tony! What have they done to you, my lad? my poor lad! Where have you been, my poor boy?"

"Oh, where hae ye been, Lord Randall, my son?"

A fragment of an old ballad came to him.

"Oh, where hae ye been, my handsome young man?"

Suddenly a big gulp of a sob came from his chest.

"I dined wi' my true love mother. Make my bed soon, For I'm weary wi' hunting and fain would lie down."

"Better get him to lie down, ma'am," the chauffeur suggested.

". . . I am poisoned, mother. Make my bed soon. For I'm sick at the heart and fain would lie down."

They laid him on a sofa in the drawing-room.

"If I was you, ma'am"—the chauffeur was worried—"I'd get a doctor. If they's anything I can do—"

"Thank you very much. Did you get your fare?"

"Oh yes, ma'am! I been paid. If they's anything—"

"No, but I thank you. I really do."

"I'm sorry, ma'am. I am so."

She heard the door shut behind him and his car go. She knelt beside the boy on the sofa.

"O Tony, Tony! What has she done to you? My little nephew! Olive's lad!"

His lips were moving. She bent over to hear. His whisper was thin as mist.

"Dearest, I'm sorry."

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"Hush, heart, hush." Her tears splashed on his face and she wiped them away quickly. She stood up. She must get a doctor—a doctor at once.

The telephone was upstairs in her little sewing-room and she ran up to it. She entered the room and, sitting down, reached for it, when the front door was opened by a gust of the summer wind.

"Olive!" she called. "Is that you, Olive?" She listened. And then it suddenly came to her what an extraordinary thing she had unconsciously done. She had unwittingly called the name of her sister, Tony's mother, who was dead these twenty years, as though she were alive, as though she were there, as though she had just entered that door.

And then a great burst of awe came to her, chilled her, petrified her. Then a wave of passionate tenderness and unchecked tears.

She put the telephone down. What was the use of calling a doctor now? When she went downstairs, she knew, all she would find would be a poor, dead, poisoned body. The maimed and bruised thing within had been gathered tenderly and taken off to rest by her who was borne through the open door by the night wind, as by galloping horses. . . .

CHAPTER XXVI

I

HE came back to his apartment that night thanking Heaven he was alone there, that Sappho had taken her horde to the country for the week-end. For the first time in years he did not feel lonely. He felt very young, very happy, and very embarrassed.

And now, thinking it over at his leisure, he said to himself: "Did you do that, Tom Shores? Did you? And how did you get the nerve to do it? And why?"

The June day was cool, and at three o'clock everything had been finished in the office. So he wandered out. Then he thought, never will there come another day like this in the year, cool and green and fragrant. He must do something, so that the day should not go unappreciated by. He thought of sailing, but sailing was not feasible. He thought of golf, but golf was too canny, too concentrated for a day like this. He wanted something with a flavor of romance. He thought of riding horseback, slowly, through the green lanes. That was not feasible, either.

But the thought of the rhythm of a horse beneath him persisted. Five o'clock saw him come out of Burnett's, up on Robert E. Lee, his honest, Kentucky bred, six-year-old. All through the Park he went,

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the hackney spurting gravel from the paths. Here was a little pond where swans were, and here a kiosk, and here a bosky dell of trees, and here a lawn like a bowling green. The long processional of automobiles on the Speedway were apart from him. And he blessed the city which left this green oasis in a bleak desert of commerce. And though he was enjoying himself, still in his heart there was something missing.

Here and there along the bridle path were seats, and on nearly all the seats were young citizens and their sweethearts, and nearly all were silent and many were holding hands. And on a lake near One Hundred and Tenth Street were couples rowing in flat-bottomed boats. And there was great laughter from some of them, but in the main silence, and the girls trailed their fingers in the water, dreaming dreams. . . .

And suddenly Shores thought with a pang that he had never sat silently among green fields with some one whose hand it was very restful to hold, nor rowed a boat with a girl in it who was silent while she dreamed and trailed her fingers in the water. . . .

"You crazy nut!" he told himself, and broke the hack into a canter. He swung around a bend of the bridle path.

Two hundred yards ahead of him was a woman on horseback, and she seemed to be having trouble with her mount, a rangy gray. As Shores came on it dived to the right, shying at an imaginary something. Then it reared a little, put its head down, broke into a clumsy trot. The rider's age he could not guess from her trim linen habit. She might

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be a tall, big young girl or a slim woman. Her straw hat hid her hair, and she was leaning forward a little and seemed uncertain of her reins.

He reined into a slow trot, so as to pass her quietly. And as he came up, the gray reared once more. Again it occurred to him she was uncertain.

As he passed he spoke quietly.

"Are you in trouble?"

"Not exactly. But I'm not feeling too safe."

She turned her head around to him; he saw her face, regular, pleasing, brownish in coloring. Her eyes were brown and quiet, and very gentle as birds' eyes are. Her voice was soft and had a faint contralto tone.

The gray reared again.

"Put your hands on his neck and lean forward."

The gray came down again. Trotted clumsily with his head low.

"Bear on your snaffle and get his head up."

"I've got my reins all mixed," she said. "Oh, I wish he wouldn't go on like this!"

Then something sudden and unexpected came over Tom Shores. All at once there was a great harmonious tingling in him from head to foot. All at once he felt chivalry. For the first time in his life he was masterful toward a woman.

"Get off. You're not enjoying yourself on that mount. Take my horse. I'll ride yours."

She looked at him questioningly.

"Rein in," he commanded. "Get off. Whoa, there!"

And meekly and miraculously she obeyed. He swung off his own hack, adjusted the stirrups. He

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helped her down, and up on the brown gelding in a sort of daze, knowing only a sweet tingling insanity when he touched her little booted foot. With a spring he had not thought himself capable of he got into the gray's saddle.

"Now where?" he asked.

"I came from Burnett's," came the sweet contralto.

"Why!" He was surprised as though it were a miracle, though it was the most ordinary thing in the world. "I come from Burnett's, too."

"Then I won't be taking you out of your way."

"Take me out of my way!" he said, and he sought for a phrase to express a vague something heroic he wanted. And then embarrassment came over him and he said nothing.

They trotted sedately homeward. A sudden embarrassment seemed to have come over her also. At Sixty-sixth Street they turned out of the Park, and Shores had all he could do handling the gray until they were in the stables and the groom had taken the horses.

"I can't thank you sufficiently," she told him. He stood watching her for a minute. She was rather tall and slim. With her brown hair and brown eyes she ought to have been vivacious and boyish. But her eyes were tender and bashful, and with a little shock he noticed there were strands of silver in the beautiful massed hair. And yet she was only thirty-five years old or little more. And when she spoke it was with the abashed quality of a schoolgirl. "It—it was very kind."

"It was nothing."

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He left her awkwardly, and in a dressing room changed into the tweeds he had come in. All the time he was saying to himself: "Who is she? I wonder who she can be?" And he puzzled as to whether he would meet her again. He couldn't conceive it possible that they shouldn't meet and speak again. He found himself racing into his clothes.

"Steady, Tom, steady!" he told himself.

But it was no use. He hurried downstairs and out on the street with an occult compelling purpose to see her again.

He told himself savagely that he was acting like a schoolboy, like a stage-door Johnny, but the vicious things he said to himself could not quiet that strange, ridiculous urge. He felt that everyone in the street was watching him, understood him, was contemptuous of him, laughing at him. But still he did not go away. He waited ten minutes, fifteen minutes. Then he said, "I will wait five and no more." The five passed, and he was still there. Then he decided: "Just one minute more. I will count the seconds." But she hadn't come. Then he thought: "She has taken a taxi and gone home in her riding clothes, or maybe her car called for her. You poor fool!"

And then, as he was about to turn away, she came down the steps.

Yes, it was she, the authentic she! In a cool green suit with a hat light as a leaf, she paused on the stairs, buttoning a glove. She was strangely virginal and very much a lady, standing there. All the pounding blood left his heart and came rushing

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to his face. For an instant he felt like slinking off. But the unknown, newly born spirit in him that was stranger than reason and convention shoved him forward. He came up to her, raising his hat.

Her eyes met his surprisedly, and in a brief moment he understood from them that she was once very unhappy and was just now resigned to it.

"I know you'll think it awfully impertinent of me," the words stumbled from his mouth. "But I wondered if you would take dinner with me somewhere. I just wondered—" he went on, ridiculously. "You see, I—"

The faculty of speech deserted him. He knew he must be grotesque. For a faint instant of horror he wondered would she call a policeman and turn him over as a masher. The brown eyes studied him with puzzled surprise.

"I just wondered—" he continued, faintly. He was red as a peony. Then panic passed over him. "I beg your pardon. I'm very sorry. This is the first time I've ever—" He raised his hat and turned to go.

And then the brown eyes smiled ever so gently.

"Thank you!" There was a little contralto laugh. "Where shall we go?"

II

Why he had brought her to Parson's he could not tell. He had never been to the famous restaurant himself, and, it transpired, neither had she, so it was an adventure for both of them. They sat near the dancing floor, served by kindly, hurried waiters. She hardly spoke at all, and he liked that

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in her. There was tremendous repose about her, and though she was abashed and shy, yet she was naturally at ease. She seemed to be observing everything, and she had a queer little manner of lifting her head and looking at Shores with a frank, shy gaze that went directly to his heart. Her laugh was low and musical, like some delicate bronze bell. The waiters were very courteous to her. There was no doubt she was a lady.

She approved his orders with little nods. She seemed enormously interested in the dancing.

"Are you fond of dancing?"

"I haven't danced since I was a little girl." There was something pathetic in her voice.

"Would you care to?"

"No, I thank you." And Tom was tremendously relieved. It was a miracle to find a woman who was not crazy to push her way on to a crowded dance floor. He liked her more and more

And suddenly dinner was over.

"I've enjoyed myself ever so much. Thank you for asking me."

Might he see her home in a taxi?

Her apartment was only a few blocks away, on Madison Avenue. It was such a pleasant evening for walking.

They crossed the rapids of Seventh Avenue, the dingy backwater of Sixth, and suddenly they were on Fifth, cool, gray, dignified in the summer evening. They stood for an instant, looking up and down it. A hansom cab drove up.

"A drive in the Park sir? For yourself and your lady? A grand evening for the same thing!"

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"Please," he asked her. She smiled her quick, girlish smile and laughed. She got in.

First of all there had been turbulent adventure in meeting her; then great delight in the dinner with her; and now beside her, behind the clopping horse, there was a great sense of peace, such as the little rain of April brings, or is given by the lazy murmur of the bees. Only one thing was troubling him, and as they entered the Park and turned northeastward he blurted it out.

"I should have told you"—he averted his head—"I am married."

There was a short pause.

"Is your wife . . . very nice?"

"She is very handsome." He found it hard to say anything but that. "She is very much . . . admired."

"Are there any children in your house?"

"No," he said. "My house is a lonely house."

"I am married, too." Her voice trembled a little, and something told him it was not natural. "My husband has been dead . . . for years. . . . My house is lonely, too."

Something deep seemed to have been struck between them. They were silent. The gramarye of summer and the soft evening fell on them like a spell of Michael Scott's. They seemed tremendously significant and important to each other. It was incredible that they had met but three short hours ago.

"Tell me," she asked, without looking at him. "Why did you speak to me to-day?"

"I don't know," he answered, truthfully. "I just felt I had to."

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"Are you accustomed"—there was a tinge of malice in her voice—"to asking strange women to dinner?"

"Never!" he disclaimed, indignantly. "Never in my life! Never before!"

"I know you aren't," she said, gently.

A few minutes later she touched him on the arm.

"I must go home now."

He knew she had to. He did not press her to stay further. He was tremendously grateful to her for having stayed so long. He signaled the driver.

"Fifty-fourth and Madison," she directed.

He assisted her gently out at the curb. They looked at each other for an instant. Her eyes were so dear, so kindly. Once there had been great misery in them, and now there was kindness and understanding.

"Am I never to see you again?"

"You shouldn't, you know."

"Yes, I know," he said, and was abashed.

For an instant she studied him.

"Tell me," she said, in her queer, direct way.

"Are you being—untrue—to—anyone?"

He knew what she meant: Did his wife love him? Did he love her?

"No." He shook his head. "No. I know I'm not."

"I don't want to take any—time—that is—another's."

"Nobody wants, has wanted my—time."

Then again was silence.

"Then you may come to tea to-morrow." He thanked her and was saying good-by.

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"Would you mind telling me whom I am inviting to tea?"

"My name is Shores, Thomas Shores."

"My name is Harris, Melody Harris."

III

On the next day he learned her meager, wringing history. The daughter of a Rhode Island gentleman farmer, she had married an Englishman, a naval architect, who had come across to America on business for one of the great transatlantic lines. Her people were well-to-do and her money came in useful to her husband. . . .

She spoke quietly, with tremendous reserve. Tom felt she had been mulling her marriage over for years. She indicated rather than said how brutal and careless he had been toward her, after the manner of English husbands who marry American wives.

"I loved him very much in the beginning." She spoke quietly. "But he did not care for me. . . . It was lonely in England. . . . And then he died. . . . And I was free. . . ."

That freedom—he could imagine it! Broken, blinded, her fetters had been hammered off, and she had been turned loose in a world that cared nothing for her. Even the daily grind of slavery might have been better, for it kept her mind occupied. She came home, sensitive, shy of people. She had not wished to let her friends in America know what a failure her marriage had been. She was nervous of their pitying glances, their faint con-

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tempt, such as there always is for a woman whose marriage has been a failure, no matter to what cause it is due. She had sufficient money left of her fortune to live in quiet ease. And so she lived with her maid in her apartment on Madison Avenue—a nun in a convent of one nun. It gave Thomas Shores a catch in the throat to know that he was the only man who had ever been there in the seven years she occupied it, outside her lawyer and financial adviser, and they had come on business alone.

For a month in the winter she went to Aiken, and in summer north to Vermont, leading the lonely life of hotel widows. She was like a person with a hideous scar, who fears people because of their sympathy and morbid interest. Very quietly she went about her quiet life, now to a theater, now to a picture, now for a ride on horseback, now for a week-end in the country.

It seemed as if the deep and pleasant sea of her heart had undergone a cataclysm of black etesian winds and noisy clouds hurling thunder until its depths were shaken, its currents set awry, its singing waves made desperate surges. Now that was passed, and after years it had quieted down to a calm, deep pool. But the sun had not shone on it again. . . .

Once she had been a young, romantic girl and now she was a beautiful, shy woman, whom thought and loneliness had made sweet-tongued and gentle and wise. . . .

He told her of himself, of his struggles and work; of these he told her enthusiastically, and her eyes

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shone appreciatively. And then he spoke of his marriage, of his wife, and his tone dropped and his voice became reserved, as hers was when she spoke of her life with her husband. He did not blame Sappho nor say a word against her.

"We just—drifted apart . . ." he ended.

She smiled at him and shook her head.

"You did not drift apart," she said. "You were never together."

"That's true!" he exclaimed, in surprise, and then a note of awed wonder came into his voice. "We—were—never—together."

Then they were silent and, raising their heads, they gazed at each other. Tender, pathetic things were in their eyes.

"Life is a long way around, Thomas Shores."

IV

In the weeks that followed he was tremendously, spiritually happy. He was like one of those Chinese peasants we are told about who endure poverty cheerfully, with one strange exotic flower in a vase. He was like some old lapidary who had one precious stone whose deep color, whose warm surface, gave him unending delight. All his life might be barren, sordid as Sappho told him it was, but somewhere known only to himself was a secret inviolate nook of shining beauty.

It was tremendously real, vitalizing his life, making a tender mist come when before there had been hardness; little laughter, where before there had been gray sorrow. His step was lighter. His

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eyes, when not dancing, were tender. All noticed the change in him. All but Sappho, who, even though she had noticed it, would not have understood, though few women would not. She was immersed at present in her own peculiar affairs.

It was very real. He felt now what he had missed when a boy, when a young man. And yet it was somehow unreal to him. There was a strange, mystic atmosphere to it. At times it seemed to him that Melody and he were personages in some fairy story of Grimm's or in some play of M. Maeterlinck's where dim, beautiful people drift in a dim, beautiful twilight.

Every day they met, if only for a few minutes. Quaint, forgotten restaurants knew them, where the proprietor was flattered and intrigued. The ferry-boats, the little steamers that ply to New Jersey and to Staten Island, were their delight. She was unknown, and none recognized him—the husband of a famous wife becomes invisible as a letter-carrier. Once they went to Coney and enjoyed it. And little vaudeville houses became dear to them.

How dearly he loved her he never quite knew. He loved her quiet eyes, her dear hair, her sweet hands. Whenever she met him peace came, too. He loved her pretty, smiling mouth. He had kissed her several times, and now nearly always when they met, but their kisses were the shy innocence of youth. She was very pure to him, very holy. . . .

But most of all he loved her name, Melody. It expressed the deep tender beauty of her, that was like a long strain on the violin or a motif on the harp. He continually thought of her as a ripple of

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deep notes on a harp, for love was making of the business man a poet. Melody! dear name, Melody!

"Melody!" he would often say aloud to her.

"Yes?" She would look inquiringly.

"Nothing. Just—Melody!"

"Yes, dear," she would whisper and press his arm.

"Yes, dear!"

V

For some reason the mouth of the harbor had a great attraction for them, and they would often stop at Montague Street in Brooklyn, whither she would go across to meet him, and gaze on the waters where the ships were. Probably deep and strong in their subconsciousness their hearts clamored to be aboard and away from all this complexity and interference. They stood on a sort of little bridge and beneath them, past the terraced garden, ships came in from or pulled out for purple perfumed lands. Here the Red D liners docked, who went to Curaçao of the Dutch, and to Venezuela. And here were the Booth boats, whose first call was the Virgin Islands, and then onward to Barbados, whose people say there is no happier spot under the sun, and to Martinique, where Josephine, Empress of the French, was born, and where the *belles affranchies* are, bronze and beautiful. Thence they went to Guiana, west of which was a terrible jungle where few men had been. And a little farther down were the Porto-Rican liners that traveled to San Juan where Ponce de Leon was buried, he who had sought the Fountain of Youth. And across the river was the United Fruit fleet,

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and their vessels went to the Spanish Main, to Panama where Kidd and Morgan had been, to Cartagena where the king of Spain once built a mighty wall and where his knights on horses had landed to seek out the fabled dominion of El Dorado, the Gilded Man. . . .

It seemed to them that all the spirits of the strange things that ships are were chiming a subtle melody such as might have come from the mouths of the sea nymphs of the Greeks, telling of golden sands and little waves sighing by them, of lands that were made for loving. . . . Come, come! . . . in a little while comes age, death, oblivion . . . and then who will care what pacts have been broken. . . . In the grave you will not remember you have been righteous and strong; . . . that will be just a matter for fools to snigger at . . . so. . . .

The palpable dusk of summer came about them like a mysterious mist. And high in the darkness above them one star appeared with dignity.

"Fifteen years!"

"What is fifteen years, Tom?"

"In fifteen years I shall be old!"

"In fifteen years I too shall be old, Tom dear."

"And time goes so quickly, so terribly. Oh, Melody, Melody, what might have been!"

He crumpled up, his head on his arms, like a heartbroken child. Her heart went out to him in swift help.

"Don't think of that Tom. Think of what might not have been, had we never met. Think of what is now. A little while ago, just a little while, you and I were apart, and lonely, lonely to sickness

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and death. And now we are together, dear, and not lonely anywhere. I have nothing in the world but you, and, though I haven't you all the time, I am not lonely any more, sleeping or waking. I am not lonely any more. And I have tried to bring you something, too. Your heart is not empty any more. Your wife is in your home, but I am in your heart—dear, where she never was, never could be. And when you are not with me, wherever you are, I send out my heart to you, and it goes to you through the streets, through the air, through the gray stone walls, until it gives you the message, Heart, go tell him he is not alone any more. . . . We are not lonely any more. . . .”

“I know, Melody, dear, and I feel I am ungrateful, but I can't help thinking what might have been!”

And somehow she knew that he was crying, this man who had fought the world and walked lonely all these years—now he was crying like a child. She put her hand on his bowed head.

“Don't I feel like that, too,” she whispered. “Dear God! Don't I? Don't cry, Tom! Don't, dear. It breaks my heart. Look, you have me crying, too. . . .”

VI

Again it was dusk and they were watching the dim outlines of the ships.

“Would it be so wrong, after all?” he said.

“It would, Tom,” her voice was soft and definite. “To desert your work; to drop the burden you took on yourself; to break your word. It would

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be wrong of you, Tom. But it would be more wrong of me, who should help you, to let you do this, which is not right."

"You are so strong, Melody! I am all of a sudden—so weak."

"You have been strong for so long, dear heart. Cannot I be strong for you now?"

"Never to see the dawn, though, Melody. Never to see the moon go down. Never the blessed sleep. . . ."

There was silence for a minute. He heard her give a gentle sob in the darkness. Then more silence.

"No! no!" she said, suddenly. "No!"

He knew what she had been thinking: Could they not, loving each other so tenderly, snatch little spaces of time away from the world together, where they could be together while noon changed to night and night to noon?

"To meet each other for an hour or two, and to go home, that is so hard. Ah, but, Tom dear, it couldn't be."

He said nothing, but she spoke on in the darkness.

"We care for each other terribly, but now we can look anyone in the face and say: Yes, we do, very dearly. But if— Then if they were to find out, we would know that in their minds it would be, not sweet or tender, but an ugly, ugly thing. And we would be afraid lest they know and think ugly of us. And then we would have to be cunning in meeting, who are now so natural and straight. We would have to lie, to be afraid. Our sweet moon, there would be clouds on its face. God

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knows," she bowed her head and spoke in a husky whisper, "I want to be with you, but I must be wise for us both."

"My dear! My dear!"

"And, dear heart, does it matter much? We are together all the time—in our hearts. What would that mean but your gentleness to me and my trust in you. And don't you believe I trust you? I trust you as much as you trusted me when you cried in my arms, and you would not show that to anyone in the world but to me—I know. So I would not—be myself—to anyone in the world, but you, dear heart!"

"It is hard to be wise. . . . We grow old. . . . We die."

"Ah, but we do not die, Tom. Shall not—cannot die!"

Her face looked at him trustingly in the mist. She lowered her head.

"We are promised. Love is strong as death," she whispered. "When we are not here any longer, Tom, we shall not be dead, you and I."

She caught at his fingers.

"We shall be together, forever and forever and forever. We shall not be dead, I know, Tom, you and I!"

CHAPTER XXVII

I

ONCE she had taken the decision of divorcing her husband, Sappho was very careful as to what she saw of de Sousa. They met by careful appointment, but were alone as little as possible. Between them was a covert understanding, but neither wished it to be known to the world that they were to be married. De Sousa knew that if such a tale were told abroad there would be certain to arise some one who would uncover episodes from a shady past. And Sappho had in her mind a belief that to be worthy of the de Sousa tradition, his future wife must be as stainless of reputation as was the wife of Cæsar.

A meaning pressure of the hand, a swift glance, an innuendo. Occasionally a walk together in the Avenue, or a drive, made accidental before witnesses with careful nonchalance. Their motives false, their faces false, everything they did or said had the off note of artificiality. They were acting as much as mummers who learn parts from a book. But each thought the other real. He intriguing for money, she intriguing for position and fame, they were audience and theater and actors too, and to each of them their playing was as real as is to the matrons of Bronxville the society drama written

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for them by some wretched English hack in his lower-middle-class home.

At times he felt constrained to hurry matters up:

"How much longer must I wait?" he would whisper, with fierceness. "After all—I am only—flesh and blood!"

"Patience, dear de Sousa! Not one instant longer than is necessary."

And then one day, walking up the Avenue from an art exhibition, she said, with casual drama:

"To-morrow I will tell Thomas Shores I want my divorce."

"And then—"

"In six months, de Sousa!"

They walked on silently for a minute or two. Suddenly his face took on an expression of stern nobility.

"There is one thing I want to mention to you. It is the first time I shall mention it, and the last time. There is a question of money in divorce—"

But she interrupted him with light, high laughter that had a queer little cruel note in it:

"I think you can leave that to me."

For an instant he was silent. Then he rapped out, "Good!"

He was going to say, when she interrupted him, that after all it might be the wisest plan to insist upon a substantial divorce settlement, explaining in extenuation that if anything were to happen to him—obiquitous, omnipresent death—while the divorce was pending—she would be in difficulties. He couldn't very well make provision for her in his testament. It would look badly were such a

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thing to happen. It would sully her reputation. A gentleman—a de Sousa—could not do that. But he hadn't had to. Her laugh reassured him. She knew what she was doing. He'd bet she'd bleed Shores. She understood what was in his mind, she flattered herself. He wanted her to understand that there must be no sordidness in the transaction, no infamy of alimony. She must come to him, just herself, her splendid self! She understood him. To-morrow she would fling Shores's money in Shores's teeth. She was to be a de Sousa, she!

And he was marrying her for money, and she was marrying him for position and fame!

II

Tom was making his usual quick rush from the breakfast table to the office when his wife appeared in the doorway. He looked at her for a minute in surprise. Latterly it was most unusual for her to appear before midday.

She stood before him, magnificent—he was forced to admit—in a wrap of green and gold. Very self-possessed, there was a little smile to her eyes, a little cruel smile. And a great fear rose in him that his little orchard of romance had been discovered, and was going to be laughed at, trampled over, defiled. . . .

"Can I see you for a few minutes?"

"Is it very important?"

"Quite," she smiled. "Quite important!"

She led the way into the drawing-room; closed the door behind them. He turned and looked at her inquiringly. She drew herself up.

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"I think," she said, slowly, "it is about time we finished this ghastly farce."

"This—?"

"This ridiculous marriage of ours. It is time for it to end."

"I don't understand you."

"I will put it plainly. I want a divorce."

A great wave of distress crept over him. She was going to drag in Melody, poor Melody, to spatter her name with vile insinuation.

"I have not given you grounds for divorce."

"No," she laughed a little contemptuously. "No, I don't think you ever would. You are rather a paragon of the bourgeois virtues."

"Then I don't understand you." His distress changed to swift amazement.

"I'll put it to you briefly." Her voice took on a staccato, theatrical inflection. "For years I have submitted to this ghastly sacrifice, this unspeakable union, and I thought I should have strength to go ahead with it to the end. I conceived that to be my duty. But a bigger duty is for me. A man—my man!—needs me for his wife."

"A man wants you to marry him?"

"A man whose boots"—she turned with sudden venom—"you are not fit to clean."

A spasm of rage swept over him, and unconsciously he took a step forward. His throat worked convulsively. And then within his consciousness somewhere a faint contralto voice warned, "Steady, Tom, steady!"

"I see," he said, simply, after a few seconds, "and have you any plans about the divorce?"

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"On account of our summer house I am a resident of Rhode Island, and the divorce can be put through there, very expeditiously and quietly. I shall leave for there to-day."

"As to money—"

"As to money," she said, firmly, "I shall expect you to pay the costs of the divorce. It is only the right thing that you should give me my freedom and bear the expense. And my allowance shall be continued."

"Well, the lawyers can arrange alimony."

Now came her great moment. She turned on him with contemptuous dignity.

"Alimony! Alimony! How vulgar you are! Did you think I should accept a penny piece from you after being freed? Oh, how filthy! And I want you to know something. The man I am to marry has more money in one of his little estates in Portugal than you have in all your shoe stores. He is a prince in race and a prince in social position."

"De Sousa?"

"Yes, de Sousa!"

"But this de Sousa—" He was going to vent his belief that de Sousa was an impostor; that he was a penniless adventurer, but Sappho cut him short with dramatic anger.

"This de Sousa! How dare you? How dare you? This de Sousa! How can you take his name in your mouth, you—you pettifogging cobbler!" Then she laughed.

"A Shores to criticize a de Sousa!"

She opened the door and turned and looked at him again.

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"You filthy little tradesman!"

She went down the corridor laughing, the rather harsh notes ringing peal on peal through the apartment. It was spontaneous laughter, for she had really had a very good time. But Tom Shores felt sorry for her, really sorry. After all, it was a bit too bad. . . .

III

For the first time in her life, in her calm, methodical life, she felt spontaneous. It was so good. She must tell de Sousa she was free. Telephone? No, better not. The telephone is never safe.

She called her maid.

"I want you to come with me somewhere and to get a taxi."

"Very well, madam!"

On her way to Forty-fourth Street, to the apartment where de Sousa lived, she curbed her intense desire to tell him how she had insulted, hurt, flayed her husband. She wanted de Sousa to know with what proud contempt she had flung Shores's money in his face. But she thought: He hates to speak of money. He considers it degrading. And also she felt that de Sousa might not quite approve her scathing contempt for Shores. She had been very mean to him, abominably cruel. But the mirror of chivalry de Sousa had given her to understand he was might have some masculine conventions about that sort of thing. She gloried in it, but he might not like it. So she would keep her mouth shut.

The maid and she went up the stairs to the second-floor apartment. Fortunately for de Sousa's dig-

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nity, the Japanese manservant he shared with the other tenant of the apartment house was in and opened for them. De Sousa saw her from the sitting room and advanced with a smile.

"Welcome, Mrs. Shores." He took her hand. As he led her in he reproved her in an undertone, "Sappho, this is not wise."

"Come in, Charlotte," she directed the maid. "Just this once."

"It must not happen again—for your sake."

"I know, de Sousa, I know."

She gave a little gasp of delight at the sitting room, furnished on credit by an interior decorator, with more imagination and sense of somber beauty than business shrewdness. Shadowy and somehow magnificent, the sitting room suggested a priest's antechamber of the Temple that is overthrown. Swathes of somber color, the dull gleam of brass, here and there a book, here and there a candlestick. It was just the sort of room that suited the part he was playing, and it had been furnished for that setting—the room of a student prince of Israel.

There were a couple of quaint Hebrew scrolls on a manner of stand, and over these Sappho bent and spoke in an undertone.

"It is done."

"Everything satisfactory?"

"Very satisfactory," she purred. "Very!" And they both smiled.

She examined the queer manuscripts with their reptilian letters running the unnatural way.

"What is it?" she asked.

"It is a quotation from the Proverbs of Solomon."

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He turned his head away, for a cynical smile hovered in his eyes.

“How splendid! And what does it say?”

““As a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout,”” he translated, “‘so is a fair woman which is without discretion.’”

“How quaint!” Sappho’s laughter bubbled like a little spring. “How deliciously quaint!”

Book V
APODEIXIS

CHAPTER XXVIII

I

THEY had been lounging over lunch in the Quatz Arts, Georgia and Homer Watkins, the pasty, elderly real-estate man, and young Clarence Renny, the son of Renny the brewer. Suddenly the crash of bands had vibrated down the street.

"It's the soldiers," somebody had said. Then all had made for the doors.

Georgia was glad of the interruption, for Watkins was getting restive under Renny's flippant fire of innuendo. And Georgia could not afford to let Watkins go away insulted. For the last month Chester King had been acting strangely, and she knew he was in love again and that her reign was over. The sooner she found another protector the better.

She had always known this would happen sooner or later. When she had gone to King from her husband's house she had had a faint, a very faint hope that he would marry her. When Lafe's divorce had been granted, she had ventured a pathetic little appeal, mainly with moist eyes.

"Chess, you're not going to. . . . You will, won't you?"

"Georgia," he had said, curtly, "I'm not a marrying man."

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"I'm sorry, Chess."

From that day on she had known that sooner or later the time would come when she would be sitting with a man such as Homer Watkins was, fifty, pasty, bald, with a wife and four grown children, as she had been when Clarence Renny butted in. It was so unfair of Clarence to butt in like that—and he was to be married next week, too!

They all got into Clarence's roadster, to travel the short block to Fortieth and Fifth. The noise of the car starting and going into gear was drowned by the crashing of the band:

"... The Yanks are coming
The drums rum-tumming, the bugles calling everywhere."

II

Down the Avenue the drab geometric column marched, its ranks denuded of personality, of humanity, even. They might have been ants going in their sinister, regular manner about their occult affairs. For a moment they were not human. Then some one cheered, two others joined, and in an instant the great street pealed like a pipe organ, and Georgia understood.

These men were going off to the strange, eternal sacrifice of war, and somewhere with them, or with their like, was Lafe!

She had always managed to keep aware of Lafe's affairs. He was in business for himself now, and married again, to some rich man's daughter, and they had a baby. And the last she heard of him

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was that he had a commission in the judge advocate's department and was going over.

All anger was over now, all envy. She wished him the best of luck—it wasn't his fault, poor Lafe! But a pain would shoot through her heart when she thought of Lafe's wife in her shining home, with her baby—it would be very like Lafe, that baby! If Lafe went to France his wife would pass sleepless nights and hours of agony. She didn't envy her her money at all, nor her home so much, but she envied her that baby and those hours of agony.

But those could have been hers, too!

Yes, but she didn't help.

"I didn't know," her heart cried. And then: "Oh, well! what's the use? I've missed, I have! That's all."

The pasty-faced old man nudged her.

"Let's get rid of this young squirt and go somewhere," he urged. "There's something I want to say to you. Something important."

III

For an instant she didn't answer. There was a throw-back in her mind of a trifling incident of four years ago. She remembered passing Sixth Avenue with Lafe, and seeing dawdling on the sidewalk a woman with a swinging vanity bag. Her business was not difficult to guess.

But here was the mystery of it to Georgia. That woman had had signs of culture in her face. Once she came from a good home. Once there had been

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love in her life, friends, attraction, and now she dawdled on the sidewalk with a swinging vanity bag. How had she come to this pass, Georgia wondered. She wondered hard.

A quick shiver passed over her; the *petite mort*, as the French phrase it—the little death; the feeling that some one, in our saying, is walking over one's grave. She wondered no longer. Now she knew. . . .

CHAPTER XXIX

I

AT Forty-second Street the crisp parade held up Sheila Sheridan, coming from the Railroad Administration Bureau west of Sixth Avenue. She had been over there inquiring about fares and reservations to the Kansas town where she had secured a job by mail as copy and proof reader on a stock-raising journal. The salary was small, the position negligible, but it was all that had arisen in the three months she was out of work.

The shuffling thud of the columns of marching soldiers troubled her heart to a savage resentment.

"Johnny, get your gun, get your gun, get your gun!
Take it on the run, on the run, on the run!
Hear those bugles. . . ."

The squat brown formation stepped out proudly to the brazen lilt and thundering drums.

Men! thought Sheila, and her eyes were acid. They were going to war. God! She hoped they'd get war!

Men! Like her husband, who had married her, used her, thrown her aside, left her without a penny piece!

Men! Like those in New York, who wouldn't give her a chance, because they were afraid of her.

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Men! Like that fat cad in the Sunday supplement office, who had fired her!

Men! She hoped they'd all get killed, die horribly. . . .

II

In the office they were all very tired of her; very shocked at the way she spoke of her dead husband. Was she going to wear mourning? For a man who had treated her as Tony Sheridan had treated her—she liked that! Were there many at the funeral? How did she know! Did they think she spent her time watching drunkards interred?

He had spent all his money. That was too bad! Oh, well, she sneered, she wouldn't starve. She had a fat little bank balance—the work of her own brain, she told them.

She made a great point of her bank balance in the office. She felt it might annoy the unfortunate devils who had to plot and plan to make ends meet.

Then one day the managing editor took her aside.

"Mrs. Sheridan," he said, "after the first of the month we'll have to let you go. I'm sorry."

"Let me go? I don't understand you."

"There's some one we've decided needs the place. And as you've been talking about how easy it is for you to get a place, and how well you're fixed, well, we've decided it's better to give him the place."

"A man, eh?"

"Yes, a man."

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"You think a man has got a better right to a place than I have?"

"Undoubtedly, Mrs. Sheridan. This fellow is taking care of a wife and three children, and you're taking care of none but yourself. Undoubtedly—there's no two ways about it. It's my public duty to give him the place."

"Oh, is that so? Well, let me tell you something. The reason you want me out is because you're all jealous—jealous of my brains. Because I show you up. I wouldn't stay here till the first of the month. I'll get out this minute—"

"Suit yourself, Mrs. Sheridan, suit yourself."

III

And then she thought, why couldn't he have waited and gone to the war. Poets had died in the war—Alan Seegar with the French Foreign Legion. And there were others. And now their works were being read and sold. Why couldn't he? He was a good poet. And in his death she could have written a preface to his poems, and people would have been interested in her widow's black. And perhaps the publisher might even have brought out a volume by herself. "Regrets," by Sheila (Mrs. Tony) Sheridan. She could have been famous.

But no! He'd only do what he himself wanted.

There was nothing to do but wait until the regiment passed. She couldn't go forward. She couldn't go back.

And as she waited a ghastly demon whispered in her ear: "Wouldn't it have been better for you

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to do as your husband pleaded to have you do? To go out with him to the country and live there the life he knew was sane? To be respected, honored, liked, even? And even if he did want a baby—babies are not so bad! Millions like them, and you might have liked them, too. And even if his house was quiet, was it not better than the room you're going to in this dingy Kansan town. You wanted your career. You have it. Proof-reading on a journal about horses. Wouldn't it have been better, now, Sheila? Why didn't you listen to him? Why didn't you do what he said?"

Her face, grown wistful for a half minute, became hard and hating again. It wouldn't have mattered. He'd have drunk in New Canaan just as he drank in New York; he'd have maltreated her there just as he had here; he'd have broken her heart in the country just as he had in the city. She was certain of that. He was a man, that was the reason—and men were rotten! rotten! rotten!

CHAPTER XXX

I

AT Forty-fifth Street the congestion caught Sapho as in a clamp. She was returning from her late lunch in a little tea room off the Avenue when the procession had begun, and she could no more get across the street to the modiste's where she worked, than she could have gone to China.

The marching troops meant little to her, beyond bringing to the surface again her feeling of intense hatred for Benny Solomons. She wondered if the military authorities had acted on her letter to them, pointing out that the so-called de Sousa was not Portuguese, but American, and within draft age.

All her life now had narrowed down to a hatred of Solomons.

II

Etched into her vapid soul, so that she could never forget it, never get away from it, was the scene on the morning she had come from Newport, her decree granted. Only that morning the news of it had been in the papers. She had tried to telephone de Sousa, but his wire was busy and she had taken a taxi direct from Grand Central to his apartment. The door was open and she had gone

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right in. De Sousa was lying on a couch, studying the racing form at Empire.

"De Sousa!" She stood breathless, her eyes shining.

He got up lazily from the couch. His black eyes narrowed, took on a reptilian glint.

"De Sousa!"

"Well?"

She was amazed. Of a sudden he was changed in manner, in expression, in words.

"I've got it. I've got the decree."

"Now you got it, what are you going to do with it?"

"De Sousa! You act strangely—not like yourself."

"Oh, cut the de Sousa stuff. My name's not de Sousa, it's Solomons. I'm not Portuguese, I'm New York. Now do I act strange?"

"I don't understand." She regarded him with nascent fear in her eyes. He approached her, smiling bitterly.

"I'll make you understand. Listen. You pulled a bonehead play in Newport, and now you and I are through. Get me? Say, what did you think I was marrying you for, anyway? And you throw the money away! And you thought I was going to marry you for your brains and your beauty. Why, you pin-headed broad, I was wise to you the first minute I lamped you!"

"This de Sousa name, then, was false."

"Oh, gee! she's waking up," he sneered. "Yeh, it was false. That was only to make you fall for me. Solomons is my name. Get that?—Solomons."

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He turned and strolled over to the window.

"Now get to hell out of here. I'm expecting a lady."

A full realization flooded her brain. Hatred greened her eyes.

"You—you—you kike!" she exploded.

He turned on her with swift, evil steps.

"You flat-footed Jane!" he began, and suddenly a flood of obscene abuse came pouring out of his mouth at her, until she gave a little cry and, stopping her ears, ran out. And then she was on the sidewalk, her divorce decree clutched in her hand, and all her being spattered with the mud of the East Side gutters from head to foot.

"Where to, lady?" the chauffeur asked.

Shores! Thomas Shores! It was not too late. She could do anything she wanted with him.

"Drive me to where I can telephone."

The house wire did not answer, and she tried the office. She recognized the voice of the telephone operator in the Shores factory—a girl she did not like and who did not like her.

"Who is it wishes to speak to him, please? . . . Mrs. Shores?" There was an accent of amazement.

"Mrs. Shores that was." Sappho had become unconsciously meek.

"Well, Mrs. Shores that was"—the girl's voice was suddenly honeyed—"you can't speak to him, I'm afraid. He left on his honeymoon to Nova Scotia this morning."

"Honeymoon!"

"Mr. Shores was married in New Jersey yesterday."

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"Married!"

"To Mrs. Melody Harris," the girl volunteered.

"Is there anything more I can do for you? . . . No? . . . I thank you! Good-by."

Mrs. Melody— A chorus girl's name. A— Some woman he's been keeping. The dirty dog! The dirty, sly, treacherous dog!

III

And yet even now she had no particular fund of resentment against her husband, such as she had against Solomons, such as she had against the parasites who had fed and drunk and lodged at her expense when she was rich, and had avoided her immediately she was poor. She didn't hate him. Her last scene with him had been more a glorification of herself than a contempt of him. He had not been much of a factor in her life.

What if she had made of him a factor in her life? Where would she be now? A pleasant, buxom woman with children bosom-high, with a comfortable home, with very bourgeois activities. Now her husband was in Washington, a colonel in the Service of Supply, and his new wife was with him. But she might have been there instead, enjoying the eager hustle of great days, patroness of bazaars, on terms with Cabinet Ministers, foreign diplomats, legislators. There would have been holidays, the pleasant power of money. At any rate, she wouldn't have been as she was now.

No, she wouldn't. That was a safe bet.

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IV

And suddenly her face had astonishment. She had thought she was going somewhere, felt, knew. But all her journey had been in a circle, like that of some traveler lost in the jungle. When she married she had been a pretty model, earning a substantial wage, confident of life to be made a success of. Then she had been a perfect thirty-eight, as the trade description is, and now? Now she was a "stylish stout"—and her feet were hurting her.

CHAPTER XXXI

I

ONCE a week Annis had formed the habit of going to New York. There were a thousand and one things to be done for her house, clothes for children, books to be sent out, music to be bought—there was this and that and the other thing. So on Thursday morning, when the weather was fine, the chauffeur brought the big touring car around and they set off purring down the great Post Road.

She had just come from lunch at the Ritz, and was going down to Taylor's to get some tape for the tennis court, when the car stopped abruptly at Fifth Avenue.

Then she heard the band and saw the soldiers. For an instant her heart wavered and stopped.

II

All normal men glory somehow in the prospect of war. All normal women hate it. It is the legacy of ancient, fearsome days.

She heard the dull thump, thump, thump of the march. She heard the crisp commands, running like an echo. She thought, "Poor Ian!"

Ian had been very keen to go to France. But at

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Washington they had dissuaded him. He was needed more here, they said. The old men on whom the strain of the country's responsibility would rest, whose worn bodies and tired minds must work now at full pressure—they needed him by them, lest they should fall. They needed his swift intuition, his daring science, his healing fingers.

And she had been glad, though she was a little ashamed to show it, that her husband would be by her at home. For she feared war. She could not quite understand why Ian was so disappointed. She felt a little maternal about it. She thought it was just the desire of the small boy for the scrap cropping out in the big man.

III

To her the marching columns were not geometric alignment, nor a drab river of men. They were all human beings. She watched officer and man-at-arms. There was not one vacuous face among them—not one. Businesslike, a little stern, they were men who were going to do a job and do it well, and do it quickly and get it over with, and get back to their citizens' business with no very great ado.

And suddenly a voice beside her seemed to say, "Look, Annis, this is America!"

She knew down in her heart that war was wrong, though she feared it would always be inevitable, as plague is, and poverty. And though the issue of this was clear, yet in her heart there were reservations of doubt. People never saw clearly when they hated. They were drugged. There were

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great martyrs, but there were great liars, too, and back of the gallant captains and the charging men were shrewd merchants and cunning jacks-in-office. There was always the possibility that her country was being fooled.

But the insistent voice called. That doesn't matter. What matters is that our country lives. The citizens spring to arms for ideals as they did when Washington called and Lincoln freed the slaves, and they wrenched Spain's grasp from the Caribbean. If they are fooled they are fooled into being glorious. Would you mind, Annis, having your husband and your children there?

"My husband! My children! My country!

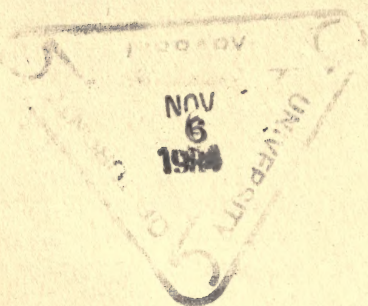
The band was a half-mile down the Avenue and its crash and thunder became fainter as the men went by. But for an instant it burst into measured emphasis so that she could hear it, plainly as though it were in the next street:

"We're coming over! We're coming over!

And we won't come back till it's over, over there!"

There was a little catch in her throat. And she turned away, her heart full as her life was. For suddenly flashing before her eyes were the swords of Bunker Hill!

THE END OF
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